**P. Tadeusz J. Nowak, OMI, Segretario Generale della Pontificia Opera per la Propagazione della Fede,**

The Pontifical Mission Society (*Pontificium Opus a Propagatione Fidei*) provides vital support to particular Churches in Asia, Oceania, Africa and parts of South and Latin America. Thanks to the generosity of Catholics throughout the world, countless numbers of churches, convents, pastoral centres, schools, clinics, and other diocesan structures are now present in territories that are dependent on the *Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples*. Thousands of catechists, priests and religious have participated in formation programs and material aid for their work of evangelization in their local Churches. In this way, particular Churches in mission lands, especially in areas where the Gospel has only recently been widely proclaimed, now have a necessary ecclesiastical infrastructure and can better fulfill their mandate to evangelize the nations.

Although the work of the *Pontificium Opus a Propagatione Fidei* is ongoing, the Holy Father has chosen the penultimate Sunday of October as a day in which the entire Church celebrates mission. On that day, we are all called to pray and offer what we can for missionary efforts and young Churches in mission lands. The success of this missionary animation also depends on the dedicated and zealous service of our National Directors, who are present in some 120 countries around the world. They represent the four Pontifical Mission Societies (*Pontificia Opera Missionalia*) and ensure that the charism of our foundress is alive and active in our day, through mission animation carried out by National Directors and their collaborators.

This year is special for the *Pontificium Opus a Propagatione Fidei*. This past May 26th, the Holy Father approved a miracle through the intercession of our foundress, Pauline Marie Jaricot. The miracle involved a very young girl, who experienced acute suffocation, which resulted in her losing consciousness. Her condition was so grim that she had to be kept alive by artificial life support. From a medical standpoint, there was no hope of recovery for the girl and the doctors suggested detaching her from life support systems. The parents refused to give up and began a novena of prayers through Pauline’s intercession. Spontaneously and without any medical explanation, the girl revived and was restored to perfect health.

The miracle was dramatic, but it is Pauline’s life story that provides the substance of the quality of holiness, a quality that she radiated throughout her life. She was born to a middle-class family just after the French Revolution. Pauline was a happy child. At the age of 15 she experienced a deep experience of God and at the age of 16 she made a private vow of chastity and consecration to God for life. She became devoted to Eucharistic Adoration, helping the poor and had a deep desire to have the Gospel of Christ reach the ends of the earth. It was in this period that she received the inspiration that would eventually become the *Pontifical Mission Society for the Propagation of the Faith*.

It was a simple concept that had far-reaching consequences. She began to invite ten friends, employees of her father’s silk factory, to pray for the missions and each to offer one penny weekly for the Church’s mission. Each member of the group was encouraged to find ten other friends to form another group, and so on. What occurred was nothing short of a miracle. These groups of ten multiplied and became teams of a hundred, then of a thousand. In a short time, the movement spread throughout her Diocese of Lyon in France, throughout the country and eventually it became a worldwide network of prayer and charity for the support of the Church’s mission. On May 2, 1822, this organization was formally registered as the *Opus a Propagazione Fidei*, known in English as the *Society for the Propagation of the Faith*.

Pauline dedicated her entire life to prayer, helping the poor, especially laborers, and the Church’s mission. In 1826, she founded the Living Rosary, which continues to flourish in various parts of the world even today. In time, she would spend her entire family fortune for the poor, wanting to establish better working conditions for manual laborers. Tragically, those she entrusted with the family fortune embezzled the funds and she was forced to declare bankruptcy. In all of her misfortunes, she never for a second doubted God’s providence and remained steadfast in prayer and care for others, especially for those who had not yet heard the Gospel or met Jesus Christ. In fact, she died destitute on January 9, 1862. It was only after her passing that her closest collaborators began to make her life and work better known. They always considered her to be a saint.

On May 3, 1922, one hundred years after tis founding, the Society was proclaimed Pontifical by Pope Pius XI.After carefully studying her life and writings, she was proclaimed venerable by Pope St. John XXIII in 1962.

Today she is an inspiration for us all, especially for the laity. Pauline is a wonderful example of engaging fully the grace of Baptism for the work of the Kingdom of God and for the mission of the Church.

Vatican City, October 16th 2020