



CONGREGATIO
PRO GENTIUM EVANGELIZATIONE

Prot. N. 4364/17

Vatican City State, 8 April 2018
2nd Sunday of Easter

Dear Rectors and Formators
of Major Seminaries,

May the Peace of the Risen Lord be our hope!

Following my letter of 3 December 2017, which was sent to all Bishops, I now write to each of you directly with regard to the missionary initiative that our Holy Father, Pope Francis, announced to the entire Church on Sunday, 22 October 2017. The Extraordinary Missionary Month of October 2019 is truly a unique opportunity for all of us; the celebration of the 100th anniversary of the Apostolic Letter *Maximum Illud* of Pope Benedict XV helps us to reignite our ardor and passion for the mission of Jesus Christ. Renewing the mission of the Gospel, as Pope Benedict stressed many years ago, on 20 November 1919, is still relevant today if we consider the current state of the world and the Church.

The spiritual, pastoral, and theological goal of this extraordinary missionary month consists in first recognizing that this mission is and must become more fully the paradigm of life and work for the whole Church, and thus of every Christian, so that we can then live it out with conviction and joy. Converting our hearts and minds, as missionary disciples, the Spirit urges us to go out into the world and announce Christ, Crucified and Risen. Placing the *missio ad gentes*, with its various facets, at the center of the Church's life and recognizing the mission of Jesus as Her heart and identity helps us to rediscover the genuine, yet challenging relationship that God establishes with the world that He created, redeemed, and loves (*cf.* Jn 17, Eph 1).

Our Holy Father, Pope Francis, has shared with us the theme for October 2019:

BAPTIZED AND SENT: THE CHURCH OF CHRIST ON MISSION IN THE WORLD

Prayer, reflection, and action will help us to live this dimension of the Extraordinary Missionary Month. In fact, "*We, by Baptism, are immersed in that inexhaustible source of life which is the death of Jesus, the greatest act of love in all of history; and thanks to this love we can live a new life, no longer at the mercy of evil, of sin and of death, but in communion with God and with our brothers and sisters.*"¹ We are invited to confirm our baptismal identity in a personal encounter with the living person of Jesus Christ. He invites us to be his witnesses in the world.

The Church carries on the mission that Jesus received from the Father in the Spirit. By announcing Jesus Christ, in Word and Sacrament, the Church responds to the thirst for an authentic life and a sense of purpose that resides in the heart of every woman and man. By offering Baptism in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit (*cf.* Mt 28:19) to the inhabitants of this world and in breaking the bread of the Eucharist with them, the very life of God, which saves us

¹ Pope Francis, General Audience, Wednesday, 8 January 2014

from evil and death (*cf.* Jn 6:48-51, 10:10), is made manifest and communicated to the world. In water and Spirit, Jesus Christ, through his Blood (*cf.* 1 Jn 5:1-13), redeems us, gives us faith, and offers us to the world for the salvation of souls. The grace that frees and saves is truly announced to the poor and to those of us imprisoned by sin (*cf.* Lk 4:14-22). Nothing and no one is excluded from the merciful love of God, who invites us to go on mission, so that all may be drawn to the Lord.

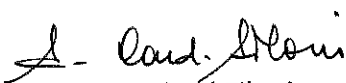
We are grateful to our Holy Father, Pope Francis, for leading us and entrusting us with a fitting theme on this journey toward the Extraordinary Missionary Month of October 2019. With this in mind and in a spirit of communion, I would like to propose a way to grow in greater awareness of our baptismal missionary vocation. In addition to any initiatives that may be implemented by the Bishops in the particular Churches of which you are members, I would like to propose that each of you initiate a process of reciprocal listening, in such a way that all may be able to cooperate in the missionary conversion of the entire ecclesial team so often insisted upon and hoped for by Pope Francis (*cf.* EG 25, 27, 30, 32 and 33). Listening to one another in the Spirit converts us and helps us grow in the very communion that comes from and is necessary for authentic missionary activity.

We are called to be more aware of the gifts of Baptism, the Eucharist, and the Church, while striving to better realize our specific call to live our priestly ministry, serving the mission of Christ and his Church. This call, when realized, can be a valuable source of communication, through listening and sharing, which develop from our experiences of Christian life and priestly formation. In order to build toward the theme given to us by Pope Francis, I propose that you begin reflecting on the following: "Proclamation, Sacrament and Priestly Ministry in the Mission of the Church," with particular reference to the *missio ad gentes*. It would involve coming together to recount individual experiences of faith and one's personal call to the priesthood. Jesus Christ and the Church, in the Scriptures, in the Sacraments, in charity, and in dialogue with the world and its cultures and religions, represent the heart of that which we would like to communicate, by listening to one another, discerning and sharing. The aforementioned reflection, theological and spiritual in nature, should take into consideration, in a particular way, that which pertains to the *missio ad gentes* and the new challenges of evangelization, as indicated in the *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis* of 8 December 2016 (nn. 30-34, 61, 69, 97, 98, 121, 171, and 175). It is our hope that each of your formative communities would organize this reciprocal listening, prayer, and reflection, according to your particular means, circumstances, and needs.

Please know that our National and Diocesan Directors of the Pontifical Mission Societies, present in your local Churches, can be a valuable reference for collaboration. Thanks to them, we are gathering important reflections for the publication of a Guide that will be sent to you upon completion.

I hope and pray that all we are called to live and prayerfully reflect upon in preparation for the Extraordinary Missionary Month of October 2019 will contribute to a genuine, missionary conversion to Christ. With Mary, Queen of the Apostles, united in the Upper Room, we remain united in prayer for a special outpouring of the gifts of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. Please know of my gratitude and best wishes for you and your seminary community.

Sincerely in Christ,


Fernando Cardinal Filoni
Prefect