

PROCLAIM

A Magazine for Missionary Animation

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"HERALDS OF HOPE AMONG THE PEOPLE"

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World Mission Day '25



Mission Sunday Liturgy '25

XXIX Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading: Exodus 17:8–13 – Hope Through Intercessory Perseverance

- The battle with Amalek is won not just by Joshua's sword but by Moses' uplifted hands — a symbol of faithful intercession.
- Aaron and Hur hold up Moses' hands — collaborative mission sustains hope.
- We are called to stand in prayer for the world — mission begins on our knees.
- Missionaries, catechists, and evangelists draw strength from the hidden prayers of many.
- In India, this means upholding the poor, the marginalized, the persecuted with persevering intercession.

Second Reading: 2 Timothy 3:14–4:2 – Hope Proclaimed in the Word

- Paul exhorts Timothy: "Preach the Word, in season and out of season."
- The Scriptures inspire, form, and send us for the mission of hope.
- The Bible is the missionary's guide — forming hearts to announce Good News.
- As heralds of hope, we must learn, live, and proclaim the Word of God.
- In the Indian Church, the growing hunger for the Word among the laity is a hopeful sign of renewal.

Gospel: Luke 18:1–8 – Hope in Persistent Prayer and Justice

- The widow's relentless plea reveals the power of perseverance in seeking justice.
- Jesus assures us: "Will not God see justice done?" — hope is grounded in God's faithfulness.
- In a society filled with delay, discouragement, and disillusionment, hope looks like persistence.
- Mission today means standing with the poor and advocating for justice without growing weary.
- The Church must become a voice for the voiceless — heralds of a better future.



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Heralds of hope among the people



World Mission Day 2025 invites us to rediscover our baptismal call to be “Heralds of Hope among the People.” In a world often overshadowed by war, inequality, ecological destruction, and the subtle despair of consumerism, hope is not a luxury but a necessity. It is the silent strength that sustains prayer, the hidden flame that keeps faith alive when the world grows cold. It is the lifeblood of faith and the quiet strength that keeps humanity moving forward. When we lose hope, we lose the ability to see God's hand at work in history. Pope Francis reminds us that every Christian is a missionary disciple; our vocation is not to preserve hope within church walls but to announce it boldly among the people, especially where it seems most fragile.

Hope, in the Christian sense, is not naive optimism or fleeting comfort. It is the firm conviction that the Risen Christ walks with us, transforms our wounds, and opens new horizons. It gives meaning to our struggles and turns even suffering into a pathway of grace. It invites us to look beyond fear and failure, to trust that no cross ends without resurrection. It is this hope that animated the prophets of old, strengthened the apostles in their trials, and continues to inspire countless missionaries who stand with the poor, the excluded, and the forgotten. They embody the Gospel's promise that God never abandons His people, even when the night seems longest.

To be heralds of hope is to listen before we speak, accompany before we teach, and heal before we preach. It calls for tenderness in a wounded world and patience amid uncertainty. It is not a loud or forceful mission, but one that whispers God's love through mercy and compassion. It means discerning where people

feel abandoned or voiceless and proclaiming with our lives: “You are not alone; God is here.” In villages and cities, on digital platforms and in refugee camps, in schools, workplaces, and marketplaces, heralds of hope sow seeds of peace, solidarity, and justice. Each small act of compassion — a word of encouragement, a moment of forgiveness, a gesture of generosity — becomes a proclamation of God's nearness.

Women, youth, and children remind us that mission is not the preserve of the ordained or the few. Women, resilient in faith and service, give the Church her maternal heart and witness to love through their quiet endurance. Youth, restless yet creative, bring energy and innovation to evangelization, dreaming of a Church that listens and engages. Children, in their simplicity and trust, point us to the very heart of the Gospel, where faith is pure and joy unshaken. Together, these voices weave the melody of hope that the world longs to hear — a song of courage, mercy, and renewal.

As the Church prepares for the Jubilee of 2025 and journeys toward the centenary of Mission 2033, World Mission Day becomes a graced moment to renew our missionary identity. Each of us is sent, not merely to announce doctrines, but to embody Christ's hope in relationships, in service, and in witness. To live as heralds of hope is to allow the light of the Resurrection to pass through our lives into the lives of others.

May this issue of *Proclaim* inspire all its readers—missionaries, catechists, clergy, religious, and lay faithful — to be courageous heralds of hope. Let us go out to the people, not with fear but with joy, not with despair but with the Gospel's inexhaustible promise: “Hope does not disappoint” (Rom 5:5).

+ **Ambrose Pitchaimuthu**

Bishop of Vellore
Director, PMO - (India)

Missionaries of hope among all peoples

Message of Pope Francis for Word Mission Day (19 October 2025)

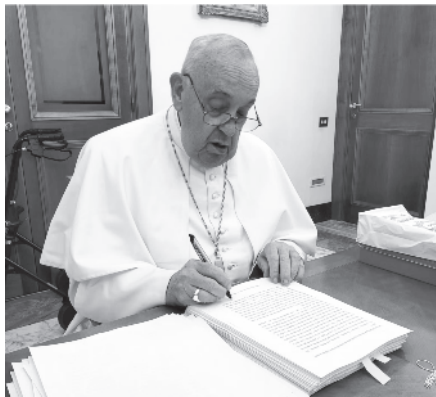
Dear brothers and sisters!

For World Mission Day in the Jubilee Year 2025, the central message of which is hope (cf. Bull *Spes Non Confundit*, 1), I have chosen the motto: “Missionaries of Hope Among all Peoples”. It reminds individual Christians and the entire Church, the community of the baptized, of our fundamental vocation to be, in the footsteps of Christ, messengers and builders of hope. I trust that it will be for everyone a time of grace with the faithful God who has given us new birth in the risen Christ “to a living hope” (cf. 1 Pet 1:3-4). Here, I would like to mention some relevant aspects of our Christian missionary identity, so that we can let ourselves be guided by the Spirit of God and burn with holy zeal for a new evangelizing season in the Church, which is sent to revive hope in a world over which dark shadows loom (cf. *Fratelli Tutti*, 9-55).

1. In the footsteps of Christ our hope

Celebrating the first Ordinary Jubilee of the Third Millennium after that of the Holy Year of 2000, we keep our gaze fixed on Christ, the centre of history, “the same yesterday and today and forever” (*Heb* 13:8). In the synagogue of Nazareth, Jesus declared that Scripture was fulfilled in the “today” of his presence in history. He thus revealed that he is the One sent by the Father with the anointing of the Holy Spirit to proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom of God and to inaugurate “the year of the Lord's favour” for all humanity (cf. *Lk* 4:16-21).

In this mystic “today”, which will last until the end of the world, Christ is the fullness of salvation for, “he went about doing good and healing all” from evil and the Evil One (cf. *Acts* 10:38), restoring hope in God to the needy and the



people. He experienced all our human frailties, save that of sin, even those critical moments that might lead to despair, as in the agony in the garden of Gethsemane and on the cross. Jesus commended everything to God the Father, obediently trusting in his saving plan for humanity, a plan of peace for a future full of hope (cf. *Jer* 29:11). In this way, he became the divine

Missionary of hope, the supreme model of all those down the centuries who carry out their own God-given mission, even amid extreme trials.

Through his disciples, sent to all peoples and mystically accompanied by him, the Lord Jesus continues his ministry of hope for humanity. He still bends over all those who are poor, afflicted, despairing and oppressed, and pours “upon their wounds the balm of consolation and the wine of hope” (*Preface “Jesus the Good Samaritan”*). Obedient to her Lord and Master, and in the same spirit of service, the Church, the community of Christ's missionary disciples, prolongs that mission, offering her life for all in the midst of the nations. While facing persecutions, tribulations and difficulties, as well as her own imperfections and failures due to the weakness of her members, the Church is constantly impelled by the love of Christ to persevere, in union with him, on her missionary journey and to hear, like him and with him, the plea of suffering humanity and, indeed, the groaning of every creature that awaits definitive redemption. This is the Church that the Lord always and for ever calls to follow in his footsteps: “not a static Church, but a missionary Church that walks with her Lord through the



streets of the world” (*Homily at the Concluding Mass of the Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops*, 27 October 2024).

May we too feel inspired to set out in the footsteps of the Lord Jesus to become, with him and in him, signs and messengers of hope for all, in every place and circumstance that God has granted us to live. May all the baptized, as missionary disciples of Christ, make his hope shine forth in every corner of the earth!

2. Christians, bearers and builders of hope among all peoples

In following Christ the Lord, Christians are called to hand on the Good News by sharing the



concrete life situations of those whom they meet, and thus to be bearers and builders of hope. Indeed, “the joys and hopes, the grief and anguish of the people of our time, especially of those who are poor or afflicted, are the joys and hopes, the grief and anguish of the followers of Christ as well. Nothing that is genuinely human fails to find an echo in their hearts” (*Gaudium et Spes* 1).

This celebrated statement of the Second Vatican Council, which expresses the sentiment and style of Christian communities in every age, continues to inspire their members and helps them to walk with their brothers and sisters in the world. Here I think especially of those of you who are missionaries *ad gentes*. Following the Lord's call, you have gone forth to other nations to make known the love of God in Christ. For this, I thank you most heartily! Your lives are a clear response to the command of the risen Christ, who sent his disciples to evangelize all peoples (cf. *Mt* 28:18-20). In this way, you are signs of the universal vocation of the baptized to become, by the power of the Spirit and daily effort, missionaries among all peoples and witnesses to the great hope given us by the Lord Jesus.

The horizon of this hope transcends the passing things of this world and opens up to those divine realities in which we share even now. Indeed, as Saint Paul VI observed, salvation in Christ, which the Church offers to all as a gift of God's mercy, is not only “immanent, meeting material or even spiritual needs... completely caught up in temporal desires, hopes, affairs, and struggles. Rather, it exceeds all such limits in order to reach fulfilment in a communion with the one Absolute, which is God. It is a salvation both transcendent and eschatological, which indeed has its beginning in this life, but is fulfilled in eternity” (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 27).

Impelled by this great hope, Christian communities can be harbingers of a new humanity in a world that, in the most “developed” areas, shows serious symptoms of human crisis: a widespread sense of bewilderment, loneliness and indifference to the needs of the elderly, and a reluctance to make an effort to assist our neighbours in need. In the most technologically advanced nations, “proximity” is disappearing: we are all interconnected, but not related. Obsession with efficiency and an attachment to material things and ambitions are making us self-centred and incapable of altruism. The Gospel, experienced in the life of a community, can restore us to a whole, healthy, redeemed humanity.



For this reason, I once more invite all of us to carry out the works mentioned in the *Bull of Indiction of the Jubilee* (Nos. 7-15), with particular attention to the poorest and weakest, the sick, the elderly and those excluded from materialistic and consumerist society. And to do so with God's “style”: with closeness, compassion and tenderness, cultivating a personal relationship with our brothers and sisters in their specific situation (cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, 127-128). Often



they are the ones who teach us how to live in hope. Through personal contact, we will also convey the love of the compassionate heart of the Lord. We will come to realize that “the heart of Christ... is the very core of the initial preaching of the Gospel” (*Dilexit Nos*, 32). By drawing from this source, we can offer with simplicity the hope we have received from God (cf. 1 *Pet* 1:21) and bring to others the same consolation with which we have been consoled by God (cf. 2 *Cor* 1:3-4). In the human and divine heart of Jesus, God wants to speak to the heart of every man and woman, drawing all of us to his love. “We have been sent to continue this mission: to be signs of the heart of Christ and the love of the Father, embracing the whole world” (*Address to Participants in the General Assembly of the Pontifical Mission Societies*, 3 June 2023).

3. *Renewing the mission of hope*

Faced with the urgency of the mission of hope today, Christ's disciples are called first to discover how to become “artisans” of hope and restorers of an often distracted and unhappy humanity.

To this end, we need to be renewed in the Easter spirituality experienced at every Eucharistic celebration and especially during the Easter Triduum, the centre and culmination of the liturgical year. We have been baptized into the redemptive death and resurrection of Christ, into the Passover of the Lord that marks the eternal springtime of history. Consequently, we are a “springtime people”, brimming with hope to be shared with all, since in Christ “we believe and know that death and hate are not the final word” pronounced on human existence (cf. *Catechesis*, 23 August 2017). From the paschal mysteries, made present in liturgical celebrations and in the

sacraments, we constantly draw upon the power of the Holy Spirit in order to work with zeal, determination and patience in the vast field of global evangelization. “Christ, risen and glorified, is the wellspring of our hope, and he will not deprive us of the help we need to carry out the mission which he has entrusted to us” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 275). In him, we live and bear witness to that sacred hope which is “a gift from God and a task for Christians” (*Hope is a Light in the Night*, Vatican City 2024, 7).

Missionaries of hope are men and women of prayer, for “the person who hopes is a person who prays”, in the words of Venerable Cardinal François-Xavier Van Thuan, who was himself sustained in hope throughout his lengthy imprisonment thanks to the strength he received from faithful prayer and the Eucharist (cf. *The Road of Hope*, Boston, 2001, 963). Let us not forget that prayer is the primary missionary activity and at the same time “the first strength of hope” (*Catechesis*, 20 May 2020).

So let us renew the mission of hope, starting from prayer, especially prayer based on the word of God and particularly the Psalms, that great symphony of prayer whose composer is the Holy



Spirit (cf. *Catechesis*, 19 June 2024). The Psalms train us to hope amid adversity, to discern the signs of hope around us, and to have the constant

“missionary” desire that God be praised by all peoples (cf. *Ps* 41:12; 67:4). By praying, we keep alive the spark of hope lit by God within us, so that it can become a great fire, which enlightens and warms everyone around us, also by those concrete actions and gestures that prayer itself inspires.

To conclude, evangelization is always a communitarian process, like Christian hope itself (cf. Benedict XVI, *Spe Salvi*, 14). That process does not end with the initial preaching of the

...Continued on Page 13

Mission as heralding hope

Pastoral responses in times of despair

Fr Dr Merlin Rengith Ambrose*



HERALDS OF
HOPE
CANADA

Introduction

"We find true hope when we give of ourselves freely and with love, encountering suffering, not running away from it", Pope Leo XIV said at his weekly audience with the public on 27 August 2025. In an era characterised by unprecedented connectivity and yet profound isolation, the human heart often finds itself besieged by despair. The news cycle bombards us with images of conflict, war, environmental crises, and economic instability. At a more personal level, the silent epidemics of loneliness, fear, and displacement are shaping our communities. In this landscape of brokenness, the Church's call to mission is more urgent than ever. It is a mission not merely of evangelisation in the traditional sense, but of becoming a tangible sign of God's presence, a mission of heralding hope which is the Grammar of Mission. The Church is uniquely positioned to address the existential crises of our time by moving beyond abstract theology and engaging in concrete pastoral responses that make hope visible through acts of presence and service.

Magisterial teaching frames this horizon. The Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes* anchored the Church's mission in solidarity with the "joys and hopes, griefs and anxieties" of humanity (1965). The Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* urged a witnessing hope that touches the heart and transforms cultures (1975). The Encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* recast mission as the very life of the Church, animated by the Spirit (1990). The Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* called for a Church that goes forth, proximate to the abandoned and forgotten (2013). The Encyclical *Spe Salvi* reflected that Christian hope is not optimism but participation in God's promise (2007). The Encyclical *Fratelli Tutti* summoned the People of God to

social friendship that crosses every boundary (2020). And the Declaration *Dignitas Infinita* (2024) reaffirms the inviolable dignity of each person, especially crucial where despair corrodes the sense of worth. These and other texts provide a theological grammar for pastoral responses that herald hope precisely where it seems most fragile. Scripture discloses this missionary pattern in the Risen Lord's Walk with the disheartened disciples on the road to Emmaus (cf. *Lk* 24:13–35): Christ draws near, listens, interprets, breaks bread, and sends. The Church's pastoral task is to enact this same "liturgy of nearness," so that people may recognise the Lord in their midst and recover the courage to live.

1. Paradigm shift: "Come to us" to "Go out to them"

In this context, mission becomes the art of making God's nearness palpable. When people experience loneliness, fear, or displacement, the Church is called to be a messenger of God's nearness. This requires a shift from a "come to us" model of ministry to a "go out to them" paradigm. The first and most critical pastoral response is presence. Presence is a deep, empathetic posture of solidarity. It is the willingness to sit with a person in their pain without trying to fix it immediately. It is the act of listening to a story of a refugee without judgment, offering a safe space for them to share their truth. This is not a passive act; it is a profound theological statement. It mirrors the very nature of God, who, in the Incarnation, chose to be with us, to share in our joys and sorrows, our triumphs and our suffering. The Church, as the body of Christ, continues this ministry of presence. It is the pastoral worker who holds a hand in a nursing home, the volunteer who offers a silent, compassionate presence at a food bank, and the faith community that simply opens its doors and its heart to the marginalised. Through these simple yet powerful acts, the

Church heralds hope by communicating that no one is forgotten, and no one is alone. It is a direct refutation of loneliness, a balm for fear, and a home for the displaced.

2. Nearness as the first pastoral act

Christian mission is not first a strategy, programme, or



campaign; it is the overflow of God's own nearness in Jesus Christ, crucified and risen, offered to a world often marked by loneliness, fear, and displacement. In such a landscape, to evangelise is to "make hope visible." The contemporary experience of despair takes many forms, each presenting a distinct challenge to pastoral care. Loneliness, for instance, has become a pervasive condition, afflicting individuals in crowded cities and suburban neighborhoods alike. It is the result of social fragmentation, the breakdown of community structures, and the paradoxical isolation fostered by digital technologies. The most persuasive homily in an age of isolation may be the Church's capacity to stay close. *Evangelii Gaudium* describes a shepherd who knows the smell of the sheep, who is unafraid of "time and presence" given to people's complicated stories (2013). This "pastoral proximity" is not sentimental; it is sacramental. The Church mediates God's nearness by the simplicity of accompaniment: unhurried listening, patient dialogue, and fidelity over time. The Eucharist shapes this posture: Christ does not solve Emmaus by decree but by walking, explaining, and breaking bread. Concrete practices include parish-based listening centers; training lay ministers as spiritual companions; establishing "hours of presence" in neighborhoods, campuses, and workplaces; and forming clergy to prioritise availability over busyness. The Apostolic Exhortation *Christus Vivit* (2019) urges precisely this style with young people: to listen more than lecture, to propose without imposing. Where loneliness festers among the elderly, the digitally overconnected yet relationally impoverished, and those grieving losses, nearness is already a proclamation: "You are not alone."

3. The diakonia of hope: service that restores agency

Christian hope is not abstract encouragement; it is enacted through concrete service that restores agency to those who suffer. The Encyclical *Deus Caritas Est* (2005) insists that love of neighbor is a constitutive dimension of the Church's identity. The Encyclical *Fratelli Tutti* broadens this into a social vision, fraternity as public architecture, not merely private virtue. The Church heralds hope when Caritas parish networks, religious congregations, and ecclesial movements link assistance (food, shelter, medical care) with accompaniment (legal aid, job training, education). Service becomes hope-



bearing when it moves beyond "for" to "with," enabling persons to become protagonists of their own future. The Church's social doctrine equips communities to advocate for just policies that protect the vulnerable: migrants, refugees, victims of trafficking, those in informal labor, and families trapped in cycles of debt. Here, *Gaudium et Spes* and Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, 2004) provide enduring

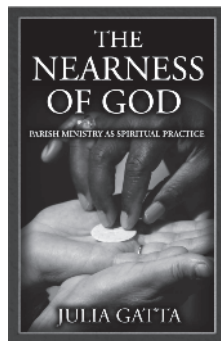
principles, human dignity, common good, subsidiarity, and solidarity, that can be translated into local pastoral plans. The end of service is not dependency but communion.

4. Hope tangible through service

The mission is to translate the Gospel into gestures, communities, and structures that restore hope and awaken a future. Mission also becomes the art of making hope tangible through service. While presence establishes a relationship of trust, service transforms that relationship into a concrete expression of God's love. Service is not a handout; it is a recognition of the inherent dignity of every person. It is a collaborative effort to restore what has been broken and to create what is good and just. For those suffering from loneliness, tangible hope might be a community garden where people can work together, or a shared meal program where strangers become friends. For those living in fear, hope can be made tangible through legal clinics that assist with immigration status, or financial literacy workshops that empower families to navigate economic challenges. For the displaced, service becomes a lifeline: providing safe shelter, language instruction, and assistance with job integration. These acts of service are sacraments of hope. They demonstrate that God's love is not just a theological concept but a living, active force in the world. They are a sign that the Church is not just concerned with the spiritual welfare of its members, but with their holistic well-being. By responding to physical, emotional, and social needs, the Church makes the abstract promise of hope a lived reality, a tangible sign of God's kingdom breaking into the world.

5. Mission at the margins of displacement

Finally, the tragic reality of displacement, whether for refugees fleeing war, migrants seeking a better life, or those uprooted by natural disasters,





represents a profound crisis of belonging. Our age is marked by unprecedented mobility and forced migration. Many experience the fear of statelessness, the trauma of war, and the vulnerability of irregular status. The Holy See's annual Messages for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees, alongside *Fratelli Tutti*, chart a Gospel trajectory: welcome, protect, promote, and integrate. Parish communities can become “sanctuaries of hospitality,” establishing legal clinics, language classes, trauma counseling, and sponsorship programs that connect local families with newcomers. Where displacement occurs within one's own borders, due to climate change, eviction, caste or ethnic violence, or development projects, mission likewise means practical advocacy: documenting abuses, mediating conflicts, and accompanying communities in dialogue with authorities. *Laudato Si'* (2015) and *Laudate Deum* (2023) deepen this horizon, linking environmental degradation to forced migration and calling parishes to integral ecological conversion: caring for both people and planet. Hope is announced whenever the Church helps uprooted persons plant their lives again in stable soil.

6. The pastoral care of fear: truth, mercy, and reconciliation

Fear is another shadow that looms large, fueled by political uncertainty, economic precarity, and the constant threat of violence or ecological disaster. This fear is not just a passing emotion; it can calcify into a paralysing anxiety that prevents people from dreaming, planning, and trusting. Fear has many faces --- personal insecurity, polarisation, digital misinformation, and the corrosive suspicion that no one can be trusted. The Church's pastoral responses must therefore integrate truth, mercy, and reconciliation. Dives in *Misericordia* (1980) and *Misericordiae Vultus* (2015) present mercy as God's answer to fear-based cycles of retaliation. Parishes

can host regular “reconciliation forums”, spaces where listening, testimony, and restorative practices heal divisions within communities and families. Catechesis must also train consciences to discern truth in a disorienting media environment. *Evangelii Gaudium* calls for a renewed kerygma that is simple, beautiful, and centered on the saving love of God in Jesus. Adult faith formation can include digital literacy, critical thinking, and the ethics of communication, echoing the Holy See's reflections on social communications across decades. The point is not merely to refute falsehoods but to rebuild trust by forming people capable of patient, charitable dialogue.

7. Loneliness and the healing of belonging

Loneliness is not only a private ache; it is a public health crisis with spiritual roots. The Church's tradition treats community as a means of grace: small Christian communities, basic ecclesial communities, confraternities, sodalities, and lay associations have long incarnated mutual care. Today these forms can be renewed for urban apartments, migrant hostels, student residences, and digital platforms. *Evangelii Nuntiandi* underlines that *evangelisation* is communal by nature; shared prayer, shared meals, and shared mission kindle a belonging that pushes back the encroaching cold.

Sacramental life is vital. The Eucharist draws isolated individuals into the Body of Christ; the Anointing of the Sick communicates God's tenderness to those who feel forgotten; Reconciliation speaks a word stronger than shame. Pastoral planning should ensure that sacraments are celebrated accessibly, bringing Communion and pastoral visits to the homebound, offering confession at varied times, and creating inclusive liturgies attentive to persons with disabilities, in line with the Holy See's calls for full participation in worship.

8. Youth, hope, and vocation

Despair among the young, expressed in anxiety, burnout, and fear of the future, demands a missionary response that trusts their gifts. The Apostolic Exhortation *Christus Vivit* proposes accompaniment that is vocational: not merely guiding career choices but helping young people discover how their lives can be a gift. Parishes and schools can create “vocation studios” where spiritual direction, mentoring, and skills development meet. Service-learning, mission



immersions, and ecological initiatives inspired by the Encyclical *Laudato Si'* can turn anxiety into agency, teaching young disciples to see “care for our common home” as a field of Christian holiness.



Digital culture is a crucial mission territory. The Church can train “digital missionaries” to create wholesome content, host online prayer, and curate spaces for honest questions. The Apostolic Letter *Ad Theologiam Promovendam* (2023) encourages theology that dialogues with contemporary cultures; pastoral leaders should collaborate with theologians, educators, and creatives so that the Gospel speaks credibly within the platforms where young people actually dwell.

9. Women's leadership and the tender strength of hope

The Church cannot herald hope convincingly without the voices and leadership of women, who often carry communities through crisis with resilient tenderness. The Holy See's recent institutional developments and numerous papal appeals point to a widened horizon for women's participation in decision-making and ministry. Pastoral responses include: formal roles for women in parish governance; visible leadership in catechesis, pastoral planning, and social outreach; and robust protection against all forms of abuse, in line with *Dignitas Infinita's* clear defense of dignity and freedom. Communities that honor the Marian profile of the Church, receptive, protective, generative, will communicate a hope that is both strong and gentle.

10. Healing wounds: abuse, mental health, and the credibility of witness

Hope cannot be proclaimed where wounds are denied. Commitment to safeguarding and transparent accountability is therefore evangelical, not merely administrative. The Church's universal norms and local guidelines must be implemented as an act of faith and justice. Survivors deserve trauma-informed pastoral accompaniment and real participation in crafting safer environments. Mental health care is another frontline. Many parishioners carry depression, trauma, and addiction; pastoral teams can be trained to recognise signs, offer initial support, and refer to professional services. Partnerships with Catholic healthcare, counseling associations, and Caritas can create integrated pathways of care. The Church's language in preaching and catechesis should destigmatise mental illness and present Christ not as a distant fixer but as the

companion who “groans with us” (cf. Rom 8).

11. Liturgy as the wellspring of hope

Mission draws life from worship. The liturgy proclaims hope not only in words but in gestures and beauty. Even the parish that struggles with limited resources can celebrate reverently, welcome warmly, and preach concretely to the fears and questions people carry. Homilies should connect the Gospel to the week's headlines and the pews' hidden tears; intercessions should name local and global sufferings; music should invite participation rather than performance.

Eucharistic adoration, lectio divina, and popular devotions can become schools of perseverance. Where fear is acute after tragedy, violence, or natural disaster, public prayer vigils in collaboration with other Christian communities and religions enact *Fratelli Tutti's* culture of encounter. The Church is at her most missionary when she opens the doors and prays with and for her neighbors.

12. Forming missionary disciples: structures for a culture of nearness

To sustain hope-bearing mission, formation is indispensable. *Evangelii Gaudium* calls every baptised person a “missionary disciple.” Seminaries, houses of formation, and continuing education for clergy and laity should therefore integrate pastoral immersion in contexts of loneliness, fear, and displacement. Courses in Catholic social doctrine, trauma-informed ministry, intercultural competence, and conflict transformation should be standard. The *Directory for Catechesis* (2020) underlines a catechesis that is kerygmatic, mystagogical, and mission-oriented; parishes can redesign programs to move from classrooms to communities, from information to transformation. Structures matter: pastoral councils that listen, discern, and act; small teams empowered to prototype new ministries; and budgets that reflect missionary priorities (allocating real resources to outreach, accompaniment, and care for creation). Synodality is not a meeting but a method: walking together, listening to the Spirit, and involving all the faithful. This style itself heralds hope, for it treats people not as objects of care but as subjects and co-responsible partners.

13. Preaching hope in a wounded world: a kerygma for today

Hope is credible when the kerygma speaks to concrete despair. A contemporary proclamation



might sound like this: God draws near in Jesus Christ; he has taken our loneliness into his own abandonment on the Cross; he has descended into our fear and conquered it in the Resurrection; he pours out his Spirit to make us a people who belong to one another; he sends us to serve, to reconcile, and to build a home spacious enough for all. *Spe Salvi* reminds us that hope is learned through “performances of hope” acts that anticipate the Kingdom: forgiving an enemy, accompanying a migrant family, visiting a prisoner, creating a job, planting a tree, sustaining a marriage, befriending a neighbor. Each act is a small annunciation. Pastoral leaders can weave this kerygma through the liturgical year: Advent as training in hopeful waiting; Lent as school of mercy; Eastertide as formation in joy; Ordinary Time as the time of faithful presence. Parish missions, retreats, and homiletic series can anchor people in this evangelical narrative so that, when crisis arrives, they recognise the path.

14. Where loneliness, fear, and displacement meet the nearness of God

Where people experience loneliness, fear, or displacement, the Church is called to be a messenger of God's nearness. Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes* and *Fratelli Tutti* direct us outward to the margins; *Evangelii Gaudium* prescribes a spirituality of proximity; *Laudato Si'* widens our care to creation and the poor; *Dignitas Infinita* secures the foundation in human dignity; *Christus Vivit* specifies accompaniment for the young; *Spe Salvi* roots it all in theological hope.

When these streams converge, a pastoral style emerges:

i) Presence that heals isolation: intentional accompaniment, small communities of belonging, sacramental outreach to the homebound and the grieving.



ii) Service that restores agency: Caritas linked with advocacy; education and employment pathways; legal and psychological support.
iii) Structures that sustain nearness: synodal councils, transparent stewardship of resources, and collaborative leadership that empowers women and men, young and old.

iv) Worship that nourishes courage: beautiful, accessible liturgy; preaching that names fear and answers with Christ; public prayer that unites neighborhoods.

v) Formation that multiplies witnesses: training missionary disciples in social doctrine, intercultural competence, digital evangelisation, and trauma-aware ministry.

Conclusion

In each of these experiences of loneliness, fear and displacement, people are stripped of their sense of security, community, and future. They are left with a spiritual void that cannot be filled by social programs or political promises alone. The Church is called to recognise these wounds and to respond with a ministry that is as incarnational as it is intentional. Mission today looks like Emmaus: drawing near to people on the road of disappointment, receiving their stories without hurry, opening the Scriptures, recognising Christ in the breaking of bread, and sending them to announce what they have seen. In practice, this means parish doors open for conversation, confessional lights on, parish halls converted into learning and service hubs, rectories that smell like soup and coffee, budgets that prioritise accompaniment, and calendars that make space to linger with those whom the world rushes past. To herald hope is not to deny suffering. It is to interpret it in the light of the Paschal Mystery and to act so that signs of resurrection appear in the midst of decay. The Church does this best when she remembers who she is: the community gathered by the nearness of God, sent to make that nearness tangible. In lonely apartments, detention centers, refugee camps, hospital corridors, classrooms, and village squares, the People of God can bear a simple, luminous witness: God is near.

And because God is near, no story is closed, no wound is beyond healing, no exile is final. This is our mission, our credibility, and our joy.

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Proclaiming Christ in a fractured world

*Fr Dr I Raymond Joseph**

1. Introduction

“Hope is the last thing ever lost”, so runs an Italian proverb. Christianity which has its roots in the Abrahamic tradition of hope and promises is also a religion of hope and promises. Emerged from the hope of the birth of the Davidic Messiah (Isa 7:14; Mic 5:2), fulfilled in Jesus establishing the Kingdom of God (Mt 4:17), progressed in the proclamation of the Gospel of the crucified Christ (1 Cor 1:23) to every corner of the world and finally to be realized in the eschatological hope of the Parousia of the Lord of new heavens and new earth (Rev 21:1).

Our God is the “God of hope,” who desires that the believers must “abound in hope” through the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus is the ultimate source of hope, providing a living hope through faith in Him. This hope in God and Jesus provides a foundation for endurance through suffering, offering joy, peace, and confidence for the future, and encourages believers to focus on God rather than worldly anxieties. In this article let us elaborately discuss the hope that is the real need for the broken world and the responsibility and mission of every Christian to heal and bind the wounds of this broken world.

2. The fractured world

The deep wounds of the fractured world are evident in recent times. Nepal's gen-Z protest that has led to massacres, arsons, and violence all over the country is disturbing very much every peace lover in this world. The Russo-Ukrainian war which started in 2014 does not seem to have an end soon. The number of people and the soldiers died during the war, the houses and settlements that were destroyed totally on both sides and the children who became orphans, all such things, make our hearts break. The Israel-Hamas war which continues for years endlessly appears to have



vowed to shatter every human value in this world. Added to these woes are the inhuman attitudes of the dictatorial rulers of countries and the persecutions of innocent people in the name of religion, race, ethnicity, and nationality all over the sphere. Terrorism from the Left and the Right leads to

untold misery. Serious incidences of terrorism are also shocking this world. The challenges posed by acts of terrorism and of desperate poverty and illness are extremely high. The world seems to be culturally, socially, and politically corrupted.

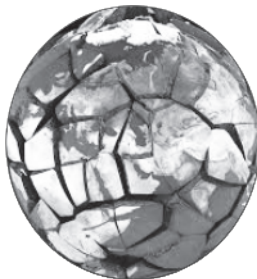
The globe is brutally hurt also from the economic and financial fronts. There are many challenges the world is facing, concerning governance and economic freedom. There are economic problems such as global inequality and unequal economic development, global poverty, and the environment imbalance and global warming which make the world literally bleed uninterrupted. The moral sphere of the world is also no better. There is decline in ethical standards and societal values which are characterized by behaviours like dishonesty, disrespect, corruption, fraudulent activities, abuses etc. in our society. This is the reason for a rise in crime and social unrest. It appears like the human beings have globally lost all respect for the other.

3. The broken Christ

If the world in which one lives is a fractured one, then one cannot identify a Unified Christ in such a fractured and broken world. Then it is meaningful to see also a broken Christ in this fractured world. In that case Jesus who was born before 2000 years in Bethlehem indeed was a broken one. He presented himself as a broken one from birth to resurrection. He was broken not only while hanging on the cross, but also during his entire public ministry in this world. For his birth he did not have a safe place. He had finally to settle for a manger,



probably in a sheepfold. As a young boy he had to be moved out of Bethlehem and to flee to Egypt as a refugee. During his public ministry Jesus said, "Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head." (Mt 8:20). The cost of following Jesus is meant that one had to follow a person who had no place to rest his head and did not have a place to stay. It implies self-denying of Jesus. It also indicates that the world will be up against the disciples of Jesus as it was toward Jesus.



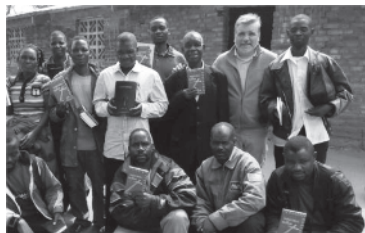
glorious past of Germany rather than living in the hope of a completely new future that comes only from God, who lives not so much above the heavens but in front of the struggles, sufferings, pain and agony of the people, drawing every human being into God's own future for the world. According to Moltmann, peace with God results in conflict with the world.

It is in this sense one must understand the words of Jesus, "Do you think I came to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but division." (Lk 12:51). One is impatient with conflict until one sees one's hope of God's promises being fulfilled. This conflict or division is quite different from despair, which tends to make one losing one's confidence. Such conflict or division with the world must be a Christian trait with which God is going on before the humanity and will lead it to new things all the time.

Jesus had to face opposition from both religious and political circles. With the support of the members of Sanhedrin, the Sadducees plotted against Jesus and planned to kill him. The Pharisees went behind Jesus during his entire public ministry only to find fault with him and to frame him as a blasphemer and as one who defies the Mosaic Law. Jesus' suffering was complete from the beginning. During his earthly life, he was rejected and despised. He also was unjustly condemned in his trial. One can even describe the death of Jesus as one of radical brokenness. He foretold his violent death which was handed on to him by this world. He spoke, "the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and will hand him over to the gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified." (Mt 20:18-19). Matthew also makes it very clear, when he points out that Jesus was crucified and he was broken on the cross.

4. Theology of Hope

Jürgen Moltmann, German theologian, wrote a book in 1965 titled "Theology of Hope". Interestingly that was the period of the



reconstruction of West Germany after the Second World War which brought despair, gloom, hopelessness, misery, desolation etc. in

every spectrum of the totally battered German society. In his book Moltmann placed the Christian hope as a challenge to both the pessimism of desperateness and the optimism of a reconstruction that aimed only at the return of the

Moltmann asserts that the resurrection of Jesus has brought the first fruits of the process and the path to self-realization, like Jesus', involves certainly the cross. God will ensure that this purpose is realized, but he will do this in co-operation with the humanity. Faith must torment and stimulate each Christian in the mission of becoming the agent of the kingdom-building. It is not that the kingdom will come automatically, nor that one must build it. Rather, God builds it and every human being is amongst his agents. One achieves self-realization only when he or she aligns himself or herself to God's will because that is the path to be what one is created to be. Without hope one cannot live. To live without hope is to cease to live. Hell is hopelessness. In the very moment when faith develops into hope, it causes not rest but unrest, not patience but impatience. Those who hope in Christ can no longer put up with the reality as it is, but begin to suffer under it, to contradict it.

5. The mission in a fractured world

Taking a clue from the theology of Hope proposed by Moltmann during the time of the fragmented Germany, one is convinced that the mission of a Christian is to bring hope and healing to the broken world. Christianity should never be a reason for



the division of despair, division of hopelessness, division of desperateness, division of fruitlessness and the division of impossibilities in a society or the world. Rather the Christians should be the agents of unity and renewal, actively working for reconciliation in a world fractured



by divisions of caste, religion, gender, and ethnicity. Paul in his letter to Romans highlights that the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit (Rom 14:17). In the mission of the fractured world not only the values that the disciples of Jesus uphold are to be virtuous, honourable, and blameless, but also the agents that are involved in the mission must be just, righteous, and committed.

To be the agents of recreation, restoration, renewal, reconciliation etc. is something like embracing costly discipleship. According to the gospel of Luke the heavy cost one must pay for being the disciple of Jesus is to carry one's cross and to follow Jesus (Lk 14:27). One cannot be the disciple of Jesus unless he or she would be ready to give up everything (Lk 14:33). Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the German theologian, in his book on "The Cost of Discipleship", which he published in 1937, says the following: The discipleship under Jesus is costly because it will compel one to submit to the yoke of Christ and follow him. Dietrich Bonhoeffer was known for his staunch resistance to the Nazi

dictatorship, including vocal opposition to Nazi euthanasia programme and genocidal persecution of Jews. Finally, hanging by the Nazi regime was the cost that he had to pay for his mission in this fractured world.

6. Conclusion

Disciples who are having the underlying qualities of self-denial, sacrifice, and total commitment will be able to take forward the mission of proclaiming Jesus' message of hope, healing, and reconciliation in the battered world. Followers of Christ should never forget that it is God, who reconciled them to himself through Christ and gave them the ministry of reconciliation. Like Francis of Assisi the disciples of Jesus must sow love among those who spread hatred, implant pardon among those who inflict injuries on others, instill faith among those who constantly doubt, propagate hope among those who are in despair, bring light among those who are living in darkness, and spread joy among those who are living in utter sadness. Such a mission will be the mission of hope in a divided world and such hope will root out all causes of wounds, hurts and injuries of this divided, fractured and battered world.

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Continued from Page 05: Missionaries of Hope Among all Peoples

Gospel and with Baptism, but continues with the building up of Christian communities through the accompaniment of each of the baptized along the path of the Gospel. In modern society, membership in the Church is never something achieved once for all. That is why the missionary activity of handing down and shaping a mature faith in Christ is "paradigmatic for all the Church's activity" (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 15), a work that requires communion of prayer and action. Here I would emphasize once more the importance of this missionary synodality of the Church, as well as the service rendered by the Pontifical Mission Societies in promoting the missionary responsibility of the baptized and supporting new Particular Churches. I urge all of

you, children, young people, adults and the elderly, to participate actively in the common evangelizing mission of the Church by your witness of life and prayer, by your sacrifices and by your generosity. Thank you for this!

Dear sisters and brothers, let us turn to Mary, Mother of Jesus Christ our hope. To her we entrust our prayer for this Jubilee and for the years yet to come: "May the light of Christian hope illumine every man and woman, as a message of God's love addressed to all! And may the Church bear faithful witness to this message in every part of the world!" (Bull *Spes Non Confundit*, 6).

Rome, Saint John Lateran, 25 January 2025, Feast of the Conversion of Saint Paul, Apostle

FRANCIS ♦

Biblical witnesses for a missionary Church today

Fr Dr Antony John Baptist*

Introduction

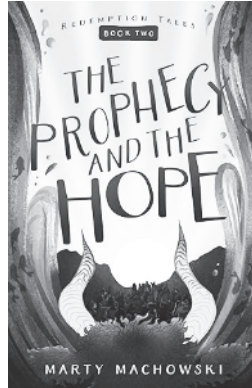
Late Pope Francis on 25th January 2025, on the feast of St Paul the on this theme from the biblical point of view concentrating on prophets and St Paul the Apostle, gave the message for the World Mission Day to be celebrated on 19th October 2025. It was titled *Missionaries of Hope Among all Peoples*. At the difficult times of human and salvation history God raised and continues to raise heralds of hope. Here let us reflect great missionary. The theme of hope is wide and has different dimensions to it. Here I concentrate on two of them: (i) hope as hoping in God, (ii) hope as interior regeneration and recreation, giving meaning to life, particularly to Christian life.

1. Hope in the Prophets

Hope in the prophetic literature has to be understood from the historical context of two Exiles. As the Dictionary of Bible mentions, "... with the collapse of the kingdom of Israel before the Assyrians in 721BC and of the kingdom of Judah before the Babylonians in 587 BC hope was put to the new test." In these hard times the prophets both responded to them and sent out warnings to the people.

1.1 Hope as hoping in God

Though these were the trying times for the people of Israel, the prophets called the people to hope in God or trust in Him. The past deeds of God and His power, symbolised by His arm (Is 51:5) gave motivation to hope in Him. He is the hope of Israel (cf. Jer 14:8; 17:13; Ps 71:5). He



who hopes in God is blessed (Blessed are those who trust in the LORD, whose trust is the LORD. (Jer. 17:7). So the Dictionary of Bible affirms "In the disaster of Israel no one could open 'a door of hope' (Ho 2:17) except Yahweh, and He would do it because of His unfailing love; ... only Yahweh can give Israel a future and a hope (Je 29:11; 31:17)"

Other motivations for hope in God are His covenant and His loving kindness. Ezekiel places his hope on the promises of Yahweh to remember

His everlasting covenant with Israel (Ezk 16:59ff). The Harper's Bible Dictionary asserts that "God's loving-kindness (Heb. *hesed*), revealed in repeated deeds of fidelity (Exod 6:4-8), gives the people of Israel confidence that he will fulfil his promises in the future; thus, he is the basis of all hope."

1.2. Hope interior regeneration or recreation

Secondly, hope can be seen as something that regenerates the person from within. In the context of covenant, Jeremiah presents the hope of a new covenant which is an interior regeneration and is written in the heart of each individual person (Jer 31:31; 32:38ff). Prophet Ezekiel speaks of the exchange of the heart of stone for the heart of flesh (cf. Ezek 36:26-28). He also speaks of dried bones. The nation of Israel was like the scattered bones of the dead for which there is no hope. But God put His spirit in them and they live (cf. Ezek 37). Isaiah also presents the hope of a future restoration based on Yahweh's remembering of His covenant (Is 55:3). This positive vision of restoration and hope in God despite the destruction is found in Hosea under the theme of the new covenant (Hos 2:17-20).

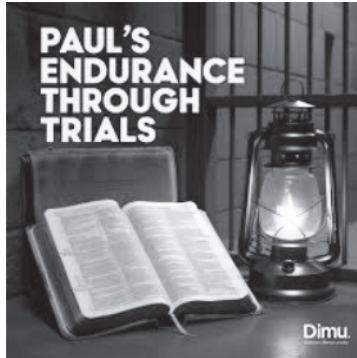
2. Paul's endurance in trial

In general hope means expectation or to expect something. In the Gospels it means messianic expectation. In the Acts of the Apostles, it refers to the Jewish hope of the resurrection (Acts 23:6; 24:15) and of the promises (Acts 26:6). It also refers to the hope in the resurrection of the Christ (cf. Acts 2:26; 23:6; 24:15; 26:6, 7; 28:20).



2.1. Hope as hoping in God or Christ

In the letter to the Romans, Paul speaks of the faith of Abraham. There he mentions about Abraham's hope. He writes, "Hoping against hope, he (Abraham) believed that he would become 'the father of many nations,' according to what was said, 'So numerous shall your descendants be.'" (Rom. 4:18).



Bultmann "Hope rests on faith in the act of salvation (Rom 8:24-25) and is sustained by the Spirit (vv. 26-27). It is an integral part of the Christian life (Rom 15:13; 12:12). As such it goes closely with faith and love (1Th 1:3; 1Cor 13:13)." Christian is saved through hope (cf. Rom 8:23-24). Hope is the fruit of proved virtue which is produced through patient suffering (Rom 5:4).

R Bultmann explains this further and applies to us, "Rom 8:24-25 makes not only the formal point that we do not hope for what is visibly present but also the material one that what is visibly present offers no basis for hope since it belongs to the sphere of the *sarx*. Hence we have to wait patiently in hope believing against hope, i.e., unable to count on controllable factors and hence thrown back on God (Rom 4:18). Patient endurance is the main point in Rom 5:4; 1 Th 1:3; Heb 6:11, but sure confidence is meant in 1 Cor 15:19; 2Cor 1:10; Phil 1:20; Heb 3:6; 1 Pet 1:21." In other letters Paul speaks of hope being directed to God (cf. 1 Tim 4:10; 5:5; 6:17) or to Christ (1 Cor 15:19; Col 1:27).

Particularly in Rom 5:3-5, Paul speaks of the connection between hope and endurance: "but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us. (Rom. 5:3-5)"

2.2. Hope as interior regeneration or recreation

In the Pauline letters, hope is connected to faith, love and Christian life. According to R,



With faith and love, hope forms the triad of Christian charismata (cf. 1 Cor 13:13). 1Thess 1:3; 5:8; 1Cor 13:13; Gal 5:5-6 all these suggest "... that it belongs to that process of new life in Christ that begins with faith and is fulfilled at the consummated salvation event of the last day."

3. Call to today's missionaries to walk in the prophetic tradition of hope

The Holy Father Francis calls Jesus as divine missionary of hope and explains it thus: "Jesus commended everything to God the Father, obediently trusting in his saving plan for humanity, a plan of peace for a future full of hope (cf. Jer 29:11). In this way, he became the divine Missionary of hope, the supreme model of all those down the centuries who carry out their own God-given mission, even amid extreme trials." (no.1).



The former Holy Father holds that Jesus Christ continues his ministry of hope for humanity and "He still bends over all those who are poor, afflicted, despairing and oppressed, and pours "upon their wounds the balm of consolation and the wine of hope" (Preface "Jesus the Good Samaritan") (no.1). And the holy church continues this missionary journey, "like him and with him" (no.1). With this understanding of hope, the Holy Father calls, "May we too feel inspired to set out in the footsteps of the Lord Jesus to become, with him and in him, signs and messengers of hope for all, in every place and circumstance that God has granted us to live. May all the baptized, as missionary disciples of Christ, make his hope shine forth in every corner of the

...Continued on Page 18

Women walking in Faith, leading with Hope

Sr Dr Metti Amirtham, SCC*



1. Introduction

Hope is the heartbeat of Christian life. In today's world, torn by war, poverty, climate crises, and gender injustice, the need for hope is urgent. Women, in particular, carry this hope in remarkable ways. They are often the first to comfort, the first to rebuild, and the first to remind others of God's presence. As Pope Francis says: *"The Church cannot be herself without the woman and her role"* (Evangelii Gaudium, 103).

In India, and especially in Tamil Nadu, women live this reality every day. They sustain families through faith, strengthen communities through service, and give the Church a face of compassion and courage. From Mary, the first missionary disciple, to countless women catechists and leaders today, their lives proclaim God's love. St Teresa of Calcutta captured this beautifully: *"Faith in action is love, and love in action is service."*

2. Mary: first missionary disciple

Mary of Nazareth is our model of resilience and mission. When she visited Elizabeth "with haste" (Lk 1:39), she carried Christ Himself. Pope Benedict XVI called this *"the first Eucharistic procession"* (Deus Caritas Est, 41). Mary's mission was simple yet profound. She brought presence, care, and solidarity.

Indian women echo Mary's example. In many Tamil homes, mothers and grandmothers keep alive the rhythm of prayer: leading rosaries, preparing for feasts, and teaching catechism to children. Like Mary, they proclaim God's promise: *"He has lifted the lowly"* (Lk 1:52).

2.1. Silent strength in history

From the earliest days of Christianity in India, women quietly became transmitters of faith. Grandmothers taught prayers, mothers shielded their children during persecution, and widows opened their homes for prayer gatherings.

One striking example is Gnanapoo Ammal (also known as Bhargavi Ammal), wife of Blessed Devasahayam Pillai of Tamil Nadu. When her husband was martyred in the 18th century, she endured shame and isolation but never abandoned her faith. She raised her children in the Christian tradition, proving that mission is not only public preaching but also the quiet resilience of women who refuse to give up.

In Bengal, Santal women converts during colonial times resisted pressure to return to oppressive social systems. Their courage showed how the Gospel gave them new dignity and strength in patriarchal contexts.

2.2. Women religious catechists: everyday missionaries

Catechists are often referred to as the backbone of the Catholic Church in India. Many of them are women religious who travel long distances — sometimes on foot or bicycle — carrying only a Bible and a hymn book. They gather children under trees, sit with families in verandahs, and share faith through songs, stories, and prayers.

Take the example of Sr Starlet from the Holy Cross Congregation in Kumbakonam Diocese. For over twenty years, she has faithfully visited nearby villages every week. She teaches children, animates rosaries, and leads community prayers when priests are not available. In her own words: *"When people lose hope, I remind them that Jesus walks with us. This is my mission."*

In Jharkhand, Adivasi women catechists not only teach the Gospel but also





stand up for land rights and justice. Their mission reminds us of Pope Francis' words in *Laudato Si'*: "Everything is interconnected" (LS, 138). For them, proclaiming Christ also means protecting their community and the earth.

2.3. Women as first responders

In times of disaster, women are often the first to act with compassion. After the 2004 tsunami in Nagapattinam, Tamil Nadu, women religious rushed to the shores — burying the dead, consoling the grieving, and caring for orphans. They showed the maternal face of God in action.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Catholic women in Chennai cooked meals for stranded migrant workers, stitched masks, and prayed with families in grief. In Kerala, convent halls were turned into quarantine centres and makeshift clinics. Their courage lived out Pope Francis' words in *Fratelli Tutti*: "Hope is bold; it can look beyond personal convenience" (FT 55).

2.4. The maternal face of mission

St Francis de Sales once said: "Nothing is so strong as gentleness, nothing so gentle as real strength." This paradox comes alive in women missionaries who sustain communities not through loud authority but through quiet resilience.

Theologian Elizabeth Johnson observes: "Women's experience of God expands the horizon of the Church's memory and mission" (She Who Is, 1992). This is true in India, where women's lives reflect struggles against poverty, caste discrimination, and gender inequality.

Traditionally, mission is imagined in terms of preaching, teaching, and governing — roles often associated with men. But women reveal another side: the maternal face of the

mission. Pope Francis calls this the "feminine genius" without which the Church is incomplete (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 103).

In the Dindigul Diocese, Catholic women lead self-help groups (SHGs) that free families from the clutches of moneylenders, support children's education, and provide widows with small loans to start their own businesses. These groups proclaim in action Jesus' words: "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly" (Jn 10:10).

In Yercaud's tribal areas, women religious run hostels for tribal children who would otherwise be denied education. In doing so, they embody Mary's Magnificat, where God uplifts the lowly and fills the hungry with good things.

For example, in several dioceses, Catholic women planted hundreds of saplings



around parishes, combining care for the environment with evangelisation. Their green mission echoes *Laudato Si'*. Catholic widows' groups campaign for housing rights and pensions. In Trichy Diocese, women animate youth groups, fight against child marriage, and encourage girls' education. In Jharkhand, Sr Vandana Tete, a tribal woman religious, has become an activist. Her mission blends ecology, culture, and Gospel values. In Kerala, the fisherwomen of Kollam and Alappuzha gained national recognition during the 2018 floods for their rescue efforts and leadership. They lived Christ's call: "I was hungry and you gave me food" (Mt 25:35).

Indian feminist theologians often point out that women carry a "double burden of oppression" — as women and as members of marginalised castes or classes. Yet, from this suffering arises a unique form of mission: hope born through endurance and faith.



3. Women and synodality: a future of hope

The ongoing Synod on Synodality reminds us that the Church is called to be a community of listening, participation, and co-responsibility. Pope Francis insists: “A *synodal Church is a listening Church*” (2021). In India, authentic listening cannot occur without women's voices. In Tamil Nadu, women already play vital roles in Basic Christian Communities (BCCs), parish councils, and family commissions. Their insights, born of daily struggles and joys, help the Church stay grounded in real life.



Continued from Page 15: Biblical witnesses for a missionary Church today

earth!” (no.1). He also offers the following concrete actions for Christians, to be bearers and builders of hope among all peoples.

- Christian communities can be harbingers of a new humanity in a world that, in the most “developed” areas, shows serious symptoms of human crisis. (no.2).
- Particular attention to the poorest and weakest, the sick, the elderly and those excluded from materialistic and consumerist society. (no.2).
- We can offer with simplicity the hope we have received from God (cf. 1 Pet 1:21) and bring to others the same consolation with which we have been consoled by God (cf. 2 Cor 1:3-4). (no.2).
- To become “artisans” of hope and restorers of an often distracted and unhappy humanity. (no.3).
- Missionaries of hope are to be men and women of prayer,

4. Conclusion: A song of hope

From Mary's Magnificat to the whispered prayers of Tamil village mothers, from widows in Madurai to fisherwomen in Kerala, women have consistently proclaimed hope against despair. Their lives remind us that mission is not about lofty words but about concrete love, service, and resilience.

On this World Mission Sunday, we are invited to recognise and walk with these women — mothers, catechists, religious, and lay leaders — whose lives proclaim the joy of the Gospel. Like Mary, their song continues to echo: “*My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour*” (Lk 1:46–47).

Women are truly the heralds of hope for our times.

*** The writer is a sister of the Cross of Chavanod, belonging to the Province of Trichy. Currently she serves as the animator of her religious community and teaches Systematic Theology.**

(no.3). He gives the example of Cardinal François-Xavier Van Thuan, who was himself sustained in hope throughout his lengthy imprisonment thanks to the strength he received from faithful prayer and the Eucharist (cf. *The Road of Hope*, Boston, 2001, 963). (no.3). By praying, we keep alive the spark of hope lit by God within us, (no.3).



Conclusion

As we are 'pilgrims of hope' in this Jubilee year, let us wish with the Holy Father: “May the light of Christian hope illumine every man and woman, as a message of God's love addressed to all! And may the Church bear faithful witness to this message in every part of the world!” (*Bull Spes Non Confundit*, 6). (no.3). This is our prayer, wish and mandate.

*** The writer is a priest of the Diocese of Vellore. Presently he serves as Director of NBCLC (National Biblical, Catechetical and Liturgical Centre), Bangalore. ♦**

Missionary response to violence and division

Fr M. Abraham*

In 1219, at the height of the Fifth Crusade, St Francis travelled to the Middle East with the aim of converting the Sultan to Christianity and ending the bloodshed. The battle lines were at a standstill. Both the Christian and Muslim forces had suffered losses. Francis crossed enemy lines to meet Sultan Malik-el-Kamil, the nephew of the famous Muslim leader Saladin, who was the ruler of Egypt and a powerful figure among the Muslim forces. Francis was accompanied by a fellow friar, and they managed to reach the Muslim camp.

They were captured and beaten by the Sultan's soldiers, who were ready to kill them. When they declared that they wished to meet the sultan, they were taken to him. St Bonaventure described the encounter, writing, "The sultan asked them by whom and why and in what capacity they had been sent, and how they got there; but Francis replied that they had been sent by God, not by men, to show him and his subjects the way of salvation and proclaim the truth of the Gospel message." "When the sultan saw his enthusiasm and courage, he listened to him willingly and pressed him to stay with him."

It is said that Francis greeted the sultan with the greeting, "May the Lord give you peace," similar to the traditional Muslim greeting of "Assalam o alaikum" or "Peace be upon you."

Sultan Malik-el-Kamil was impressed by Francis' holiness and courage. Rather than condemning Islam, Francis spoke of his love for God and his desire to share the message of Christ.



The Sultan did not convert to Christianity, but he admired Francis' sincerity and allowed him to preach for several days in



Catholic Peacebuilding in Times of Crisis: Hope for a Wounded World

his court. He even offered him gifts, which Francis refused, saying that his mission was spiritual, not material. This surprised the Sultan, who was not used to people refusing earthly riches. After several days, Francis was given safe passage back to the Christian camp, and the Sultan became more lenient

towards his Christian prisoners of war.

"Francis did not wage a war of words aimed at imposing doctrines; he simply spread the love of God," Pope Francis said in his encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*. He understood that 'God is love and those who abide in love abide in God' (1 Jn 4:16). In this way, he became a father to all and inspired the vision of a fraternal society. "Indeed, 'only the man who approaches others, not to draw them into his own life, but to help them become ever more fully themselves, can truly be called a father'. "In the world of that time, bristling with watchtowers and defensive walls, cities were a theatre of brutal wars between powerful families, even as poverty was spreading through the countryside. "Yet there, Francis was able to welcome true peace into his heart and free himself of the desire to wield power over others." "He became one of the poor and sought to live in harmony with all." This story was also a motivating reason for why the Franciscan Order was given custody of the sacred sites of Jerusalem, which they still hold today.

Today, we are living in a fractured world. Wars rage across continents, and people are divided by ethnic and religious divisions. The earth is groaning under the weight of ecological devastation.

In the Indian context, a "mental disease" called the caste destroys human dignity and equality, and also destroys Christianity and the values of Christ. We can see violence in all the spheres of life. We see violence and war becoming the day-to-day life in Gaza and Palestine. The devastations that are taking place in Gaza have

displaced millions of people, leaving behind shattered homes and traumatized hearts. Our societies are divided by caste, religion, race, colour, and ideology, which fracture our communities and erode trust. It is not people who rule the world; it is “ideology” that rules the world. The world suffers because of the beliefs and wrong ideologies that destroy the peace of the earth. Ecological crises threaten the very survival of vulnerable populations, especially the poor and marginalized. These divisions and problems are not distant; they are personal. They wound the lives of our neighbours and destroy our religion and congregations. Our global family is dying because of the divided world and fragmented people.



Fear is the root cause of all violence.

Fear is the root cause of all violence, and doubts create fear and faithlessness. One nation is afraid of another. This fear compels them to manufacture weapons, and they claim they are producing bombs and weapons or arms to bring forth peace. In this context, the missionary response must be more than charitable outreach; it must be a prophetic witness to hope.

Who is a real missionary today?

“A church that does not provoke any crisis, a gospel that does not unsettle, a word of God that does not get under anyone's skin, a word of God that does not touch the real sin of the society in which it is being proclaimed, what gospel is that?”. These are the golden words of Archbishop Romero, who was assassinated on 24th March 1980 during the Holy Mass.

“Why has truth become so bitter, dissent so intolerable, justice so out of reach? Yet.... Truth must be spoken, right to dissent must be upheld and justice must reach the doorsteps of the poor. “I am not a silent spectator.” - This is the cry of Fr. Stan Samy, who died in prison on 5th July 2021.

How are we proclaiming the word of God? Are we challenging the unjust structures as St Romero and Fr Stan Samy? Had Jesus preached the same message that some of us are preaching

today, certainly he would not have been killed. What is our response as disciples of Jesus? The missionary response to violence and division must be based on the teaching of Jesus and the model of St Romero and Fr Stan Samy.

Let us follow....

- Jesus, a rebel, a radical, and a revolutionary God.

- St Romero, the voice of the

voiceless.

- Fr Stan Samy, a prophet of this

modern day.

- Let us stand in solidarity with those who are suffering.
- Let us have a dialogue across cultures and faith.
- Let us promote ecological justice and global peace.

The new missionaries are....

- Educators and health workers, restoring dignity through service.
- Advocates for justice, challenging systems that perpetuate exclusion.
- Interfaith collaborators, building bridges where others see barriers.
- Environmental stewards, calling for conversion of heart and lifestyle.
- People who are working for a casteless society.



As Pope Francis rightly said, today people don't need preachers but witnesses. The above are the witnesses, and the witnesses are powerful. They become living saints of hope. This is a polarized world. To

be a missionary in this situation, we need to become a bridge like St Francis, connecting the hearts of the people with empathy, openness, and compassionate love. The reign of God is complete only when a definitive reconciliation between man and man, between man and nature, and between man and God are attained.

St Francis, the man of global appeal and universal relevance

After 800 years, St. Francis 'Cantic of the Creatures' still offers a radical vision.

- “When I think of the prayer of St. Francis, I think of his tears, his cries. For him, prayer had a deeply affective dimension... his relationship with Jesus was not an idea or theory but a bond of passion and love.” – Pope Francis.

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The missionary spirit of the little ones

*Sr Margarita Dias SCB**



“And whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me.” (Mt 18:5) “Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs.” (Mt 19:14)

Children are God's most precious gift to the Church and the world. Their laughter, trust, and innocent prayers often become powerful reminders that hope is never lost. In the Come to Me Children's Prayer Group, we witness daily how little ones, through their simplicity and pure faith, become true heralds of hope. They do not need grand platforms to proclaim God's love. Their joy, actions, and prayers become powerful instruments of evangelization in the world today.

Everyday prayer online

“Pray without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17).

Every day, children gather online in two batches—at 5 p.m. and 8 p.m.—to pray for the Church, missionaries, their families, and the needs of the world. Though small in age, their prayers are big in love and concern. They pray for peace in the world, for the sick, for the poor, and for families struggling to stay united. These simple yet powerful prayer moments foster a deep sense of responsibility towards others, nurturing their missionary spirit from a young age.

Building strong families

“But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord” (Joshua 24:15).

In addition to online prayer, the children gather offline once in a while to meet and build stronger relationships with one another. These gatherings help deepen their friendships and strengthen their family bonds through shared prayer, games, and learning about God's love. Children are taught that their families are the first “domestic church” where they live out their mission of love and service every day. These joyful encounters foster a sense of community



and the importance of praying together as a family.

Evangelizing through sacrifice

“God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Corinthians 9:7).

A key lesson the children are taught is that true mission is expressed through giving. Inspired by the Gospel, they cheerfully offer their personal pocket money to support deserving students who need help for their education. These small sacrifices are done willingly and joyfully, teaching the children that giving is an important way of showing God's love to others. They understand that no gift is too small when given with a loving heart.

Time and talent for others

“Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ” (Galatians 6:2).

Besides money, children also dedicate their time and talents to pray for other families and children. They sing hymns, participate in



prayer services, and help lead sessions of intercessory prayer. Their innocent hearts teach us that mission is not only for adults or priests, but for everyone who wishes to share God's love, beginning with simple, consistent actions.

Word of God alive

"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Psalm 119:105).

With great enthusiasm, the children read the Bible and lead prayer sessions together. They understand that evangelization starts by listening to the Word of God, which helps them grow in faith and share that light with others.

The beauty of their witness is that it is simple and profound. Children remind us that mission is not measured by size, but by love.



Their prayers are often the strongest homilies, their sacrifices the most generous offerings, their joy the brightest proclamation of the Gospel. As Pope Francis reminds us, "Every child brings us the message that God has not yet

despaired of the world." In their prayers, sacrifices, and love for others, the Come to Me children reveal that hope is alive in the Church and is passed on from generation to generation.

"A little child shall lead them" (Is 11:6).

May we follow their example, carrying forward the light of Christ with joy, simplicity, and missionary spirit.

The writer, a Sister of St Charles Borromeo Western province, is the Directress of the Come To Me Daily Children's Prayer Group ♦

◆ **Continued from Page 20: Missionaries response to violence and division** ◆

- For as popular as the "canticle" is, it is striking how little attention is paid to what it conveys of St. Francis's radical theological vision of creation.
- He was already one with himself and with the world, and the world was one in him.
- The canticle is a celebration of the chorus of praise expressed by the whole cosmos.
- When we are selfish, divisive, polarizing, unforgiving, and the like, not only are we not praising God, but according to Francis, we are also not being fully human.
- He localized, globalized, and even universalized his love.
- He radically followed Jesus and was possessed by Jesus. He is the best model missionary in this wounded and divided world.



hateful words and actions of the evildoers but for the appalling silence of the good people." – Rev Martin Luther King.

We are not a drop in the ocean. We are the entire ocean in a drop. We are the universe expressing itself as a human for a little while. Everything in life is speaking in spite of its apparent silence.

When the disciples were warned not to speak about Jesus and his teachings, they proclaimed the gospel with much more enthusiasm.

The resurrection of Jesus is God's response to the unjust and criminal action of humankind. And shows directly the triumph of justice over injustice.

All darkness in the world cannot extinguish the light of a single candle; we are all candles.

*** The writer, a priest of the Diocese of Vellore, is Secretary to the Diocesan Commission for Proclamation. ♦**

Conclusion

"We will have to repent...not merely for the

From Mercy to Hope to Mission

Heralds of Hope for the Jubilee: missionary pathways towards 2033

Fr Dr Yesu Karunanidhi



The Church is walking a three-stage arc: the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy (2015), the Ordinary Jubilee (2025) with the theme Pilgrims of Hope, and — just ahead — the Great Jubilee of 2033, marking two millennia since the Lord's Paschal Mystery. This arc traces a path from mercy received and shared, through hope proclaimed and embodied, toward the mission we are sent to fulfil: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations ...” (Mt 28:19–20; Mk 16:15).

Jubilee of Mercy (2015): mercy, the beating heart of the Gospel

Pope Francis opened the Holy Door in 2015 to remind the Church and the world that “Jesus Christ is the face of the Father's mercy,” and that we must “constantly contemplate the mystery of mercy; it is a wellspring of joy, serenity, and peace.” Mercy, he insisted, is not peripheral but central to evangelization; wherever Christians are present, “everyone should find an oasis of mercy.”

Mercy evangelizes because it heals memory, restores dignity, and opens the door to faith. Works of mercy — spiritual and corporal — are not an optional appendix to mission; they are mission in action.

Jubilee 2025: pilgrims of hope

The Bull of Indiction for 2025 begins with Saint Paul's assurance: “Hope does not disappoint” (*Spes non confundit*,

Rom 5:5). The Jubilee calls every local Church to become a school and sign of hope — an encounter with Jesus, the “door” of salvation — so that those discouraged by our times may be renewed in confident trust.

This Jubilee is intentionally set in continuity with 2015 and in movement toward 2033: Pope Francis notes that 2033 will mark the two-thousandth anniversary of our redemption, inviting the whole Church to journey in faith, charity, and hope.

Great Jubilee 2033: Mission to the ends of the earth

Mercy (2015) forms hearts; hope (2025) steadies our steps; 2033 focuses our horizon on the Great Commission — the Church “going forth,” where every baptized person is a missionary disciple (*Evangelii Gaudium* 119–121). The Church that goes forth “takes the first step ... goes out to others ... and welcomes the outcast” — a missionary option that re-orientes structures, schedules, and language toward evangelization.

Integrating mercy and hope on the way to 2033

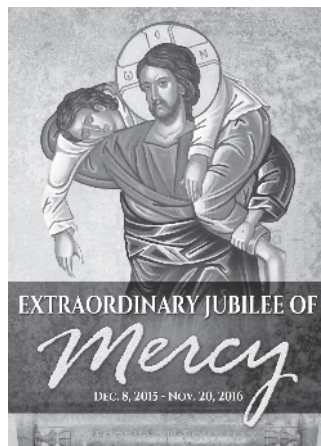
A. Receive mercy, speak hope, live mission.

Let the Sacrament of Reconciliation and works of mercy shape our tone: gentle, truthful, and encouraging — so that parishes become “oases of mercy” and communities that practice hope.

B. Form consciences for witness.

Preaching and catechesis should show how mercy heals, and hope sustains — especially amid polarization, poverty, and conflict — so that Christians can give “an account of the hope” (1 Pet 3:15) with humility and parrhesia.

C. Re-shape structures for a missionary option. Plan parish life, diocesan priorities, and Catholic



organizations around outward-facing service and proclamation, not maintenance — placing the poor and the far-away at the centre.

Missionary pathways in today's workplaces

1. As an individual disciple (three practices)

Presence with integrity. Be the colleague whose words are reliable, whose conflicts are reconciled, and whose compassion is concrete (e.g., mentoring, fair dealing, care for the struggling). Mercy makes the Gospel credible.

Quiet proclamation. Share the reason for your hope when asked; offer prayer appropriately; invite to parish events, Scripture groups, or service initiatives. (*EG* calls this everyday, person-to-person evangelization.)



Our Parish Community

A family for all

Works of mercy at work. Start a simple fund for emergencies, organize

blood-donation days or skill-sharing for junior staff; align small acts of justice and charity with your company's CSR where possible.

2. As a parish community (three commitments)

A parish that goes forth. Re-design timetables and ministries to meet people where they are — shift some catechesis and accompaniment into evenings/online; hold “Mercy Clinics” (legal/medical/mental-health signposting) on site. Parishes remain vital when they self-renew in mission as “communities of communities.”

Hope on display. Make the parish a steady sign of hope: intercessory evenings for the city, counselling referrals, solidarity networks for the unemployed, and public prayer for peace.



Apprenticeship in witness. Train small parish teams to share the kerygma, read Scripture with seekers, and accompany returnees to the faith—forming missionary disciples who can multiply.

3. As a diocese (three directions)

2033 Roadmap. Publish a diocesan Mercy-Hope-Mission plan through 2033, aligning catechesis, social outreach, and evangelization; encourage each parish to name tangible yearly goals. (The 2025 Bull explicitly points us toward 2033.)

Mission-oriented governance. Audit structures, budgets, and schedules with the *EG* 27 lens: do they help us go out, or keep us turned in on ourselves? Reallocate time and resources to frontline evangelization and the poor.

Public witness of hope. Coordinate diocesan-wide signs of hope — reconciliation initiatives, peace prayers, youth mentorship, ecology projects — so the Church is seen as a builder of common good in anxious times.

A brief theological thread

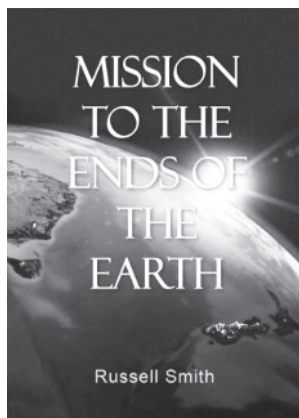
Mercy reveals the Father's heart in Christ and is the Gospel's “beating heart.” That is why mercy both converts and sends.

Hope keeps mission steady under pressure. The 2025 Jubilee bids us recover Christian patience and persevere, confident that God's promises do not fail.

Mission flows from Baptism: every Christian is a missionary disciple; parishes and dioceses exist to evangelize.

Mission Sunday 2025: “Heralds of Hope among the People” in India

In India's vibrant, plural society — where faith meets poverty, polarization, migration, and a vast youth population — World Mission Sunday 2025 is a timely summons to become missionaries of hope in everyday life. Pope Francis' official



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Guides for ordinary holiness

Pope's homily at canonization of Pier Giorgio Frassati and Carlo Acutis



Presiding over the Mass and canonization of Pier Giorgio Frassati and Carlo Acutis in Saint Peter's Square, Pope Leo XIV paid tribute to their extraordinary witnesses to faith, hope, and trust in God, and to the Lord's great plan for eternal joy and happiness. The Pope declared the two young Italian Saints at the start of the celebration on a stunningly beautiful late summer day, Sunday 7 September.

In his homily, the Pope reflected on the extraordinary witness of both new Saints. Recalling words from the first Sunday reading from the Book of Wisdom, the Pope observed that, like King Solomon, these young men sought the gift of wisdom to better understand God's plans for our lives and world, and follow them faithfully. And in doing so, they used their gifts to bring others to God through their example, words, and actions.

Giving ourselves to the Lord

In the Gospel reading, Jesus speaks to us of God's plan, to which we must commit wholeheartedly, abandoning ourselves "without hesitation to the adventure that he offers us, with the intelligence and strength that comes from his

Spirit," the Pope recalled. Young people often face crossroads in their lives and have to make difficult choices, the Pope observed; and, recalling the example of Francis of Assisi, he pointed out that the Saint opted for "the wonderful story of holiness that we all know, stripping himself of everything to follow the Lord, living in poverty and preferring the love of his brothers and sisters, especially the weakest and smallest, to his father's gold, silver, and precious fabrics."

Saying "yes" to God

So many saints down through history have made similar courageous choices, looking up to God, and, while they were very young, the Pope recalled, offering their "yes" to God, giving themselves complete to Him, "keeping nothing for themselves." The Pope recalled how Saint Augustine felt a voice deep within him that said: "I want you", and "God gave him a new direction, a new path, a new reason, in which nothing of his life was lost."

Pier Giorgio Frassati, beacon for lay spirituality

Describing the life of Saint Pier Giorgio Frassati, a young Italian man of the early 20th century, his participation in Catholic associations and service to the poor, the Pope said that also today "Pier Giorgio's life is a beacon for lay spirituality," since faith was not

a private matter and could be lived in community in with membership in ecclesial associations and through generous commitment to political life and service to the poor.

Carlo Acutis, witness of holiness in simplicity

Speaking about the witness of young Italian Saint Carlo Acutis, a teenager of our own day, the Pope spoke



about how he encountered Jesus in his family, thanks to his parents, Andrea and Antonia, recalling their presence at this celebration along with his two siblings, Francesca and Michele. Saint Carlo also found and lived his faith through school, but especially the sacraments celebrated in the parish community, the Pope went on to say, noting how “he grew up naturally integrating prayer, sport, study and charity into his days as a child and young man.”

Cultivating love for God and neighbour

Daily Mass, prayer, and especially Eucharistic Adoration, marked the lives of Saints Pier Giorgio and Carlo in cultivating their love for God and neighbor through simple acts of charity, the Pope said. And even as illness struck both of them, cutting their lives short, they continued to bear witness to hope and offer themselves to God, the Pope added, recalling how Pier Giorgio once said: “The day of

my death will be the most beautiful day of my life”; and how young Carlo often remarked that “heaven has always been waiting for us, and that to love tomorrow is to give the best of our fruit today.”



Making masterpieces of our lives

In conclusion, Pope Leo underscored how both Saints Pier Giorgio Frassati and Carlo Acutis invite everyone, “especially young people, not to squander our lives, but to direct them upwards and make them masterpieces.” *“They encourage us with their words: ‘Not I, but God,’ as Carlo used to say. And Pier Giorgio: ‘If you have God at the center of all your actions, then you will reach the end.’ This is the simple but winning formula of their holiness. It is*

also the type of witness we are called to follow, in order to enjoy life to the full and meet the Lord in the feast of heaven.”-----

<https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2025-09> ♦

Continued from Page 24 : From Mercy to Hope to Mission

motto, “Missionaries of Hope Among All Peoples,” invites us to turn workplaces, campuses, villages, and digital spaces into signs that God has not abandoned His people; prayer, witness, and concrete charity keep this hope burning and shared. This missionary hope stands on the mercy we received and give (*Misericordiae vultus*) and looks toward the Great Jubilee 2033 through the Jubilee's call to persevere in hope (*Spes non confundit*). Practically, Mission Sunday 2025 can be our springboard: dioceses can launch 2033 roadmaps focused on catechesis and social outreach; parishes can form small “hope teams” for visitation, youth mentorship, and interreligious friendship; individuals can pair daily prayer with one act of mercy and one invitation to the Gospel each week. In this way, India's Catholics — though few — become heralds of hope among the people, knitting mercy and hope into a sustained missionary pathway toward 2033.

Conclusion: Walking together to the Great Jubilee

If 2015 taught us to receive and offer mercy, and 2025 summons us to live and speak hope, then 2033 calls us to complete the arc — hearts formed by mercy, voices steady with hope, feet set on mission. Let us become, in workplaces and neighbourhoods, heralds of hope whose lives make the Church's invitation believable. Then, approaching 2033, we will hear anew the Lord's promise: “I am with you always” (Mt 28:20) — and the world will glimpse, through us, the radiant face of the Father's mercy and the sure hope that does not disappoint.

*** The writer, a priest of the Archdiocese of Madurai, Tamil Nadu, is a Missionary of Mercy mandated by Pope Francis. Currently he serves as the Head of Programs, at NDS Centre for Biblical Formation, Jerusalem, Israel. He can be contacted at yesu@live.in ♦**

SAINT OF THE MONTH – I

St Nicholas of Tolentino

1245– 1305

Feast Day : 10 September



Nicholas of Tolentino, known as the "Patron of Holy Souls", was an Italian Catholic mystic who is invoked as an advocate for the souls in Purgatory, especially during Lent and the month of November. He was a member of the

Augustinians, whose churches today, together with those of the Discalced Augustinians, hold weekly devotions to St Nicholas on behalf of the suffering souls.

Born in 1245 in Sant'Angelo in Pontano, Nicholas of Tolentino took his name from St Nicholas of Myra, at whose shrine his parents prayed to have a child. From a tender age, Nicholas fled from all that was worldly and frivolous and prayed with such recollection that he awakened admiration. At only seven, he started to fast three times a week and to eagerly welcome the poor into the family home. He would also retire to a nearby cave to devote himself to solitary prayer.

A studious, kind and gentle youth, at the age of 16 Nicholas became an Augustinian novice and was a student of the Blessed Angelus de Scarpetti. A friar at the Priory of St Augustine in Recanati, the priory at Macerata and others, he was ordained in 1270 at the age of 25, and soon became known for his preaching and teachings. Nicholas, who had had visions of angels reciting "to Tolentino", in 1274 took this as a sign to move to that city, where he lived the rest of his life. Nicholas worked to counteract the decline of morality and religion which came with the development of city life in the late thirteenth century.

On account of his kind and gentle manner his superiors entrusted him with the daily feeding of the poor at the monastery gates, but at times he

was so free with the friary's provisions that the procurator begged the superior to check his generosity. Once, when weak after a long fast, he received a vision of Jesus, the Blessed Virgin Mary, and Saint Augustine. He was told to eat some bread marked with a cross and dipped in water. Upon doing so he was immediately stronger. He started distributing these rolls to the ailing, while praying to Mary, often curing the sufferers; this is the origin of the Augustinian custom of blessing and distributing *Saint Nicholas Bread*.

In Tolentino, Nicholas worked as a peacemaker in a city torn by strife between the Guelphs and Ghibellines who, in the conflict for control of Italy, supported the Pope and the Holy Roman Emperor respectively. He ministered to his flock, helped the poor and visited prisoners. When working wonders or healing people, he always asked those he helped to "Say nothing of this", explaining that he was just God's instrument.

In monastic life, the devil has particular hatred for prayer. He uses every means permitted by God to hinder this holy activity, in which the religious receives the strength to persevere and to progress in the spiritual life. In order to disrupt the habitual recollection of St Nicholas, the evil one would emit terrible screams, or reproduce animal sounds such as the snorting of bulls, the roar of lions, the howling of wolves and the hissing of serpents. At other times, he seemed to be opening the roof, breaking the shingle tiles, smashing pictures or even knocking the house down. The Saint, however, remained impassive, without giving the least sign of fear or alarm.

Sometimes the attacks were more direct. One day, the spirit of darkness entered his cell under the form of a giant bird, and with the beating of its wings upset the lantern that lit his oratory, breaking it to pieces. St Nicholas prayed, took the fragments, fitted them back together, and with a breath, set the lantern alight again, as if nothing had happened. The same was repeated on two other occasions.

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SAINT OF THE MONTH - II

St Maria Bertilla Boscardin

1888 – 1922

Feast Day : 20 October



If anyone knew rejection, ridicule and disappointment, it was St Maria Bertilla Boscardin. But such trials only brought Saint Maria Bertilla closer to God and more determined to serve him.

St Maria Bertilla was born Anna Francesca, on October 6, 1888, in Brendola, Italy, to a peasant family. She grew up in poverty facing many a hardship. Young Anna Boscardin overcame a variety of obstacles through the grace of God and went on to serve those who struggled with their own. Her father admitted in the investigations that led up to his daughter's beatification that he was violent, abusive and struggled with bouts of alcoholism, which forced the young girl and her mother to seek safety often by fleeing the family home. Attendance at school was a rare privilege for young Annette, as she was called most commonly. She had to leave classes frequently to assist her family at home and in harvesting the fields. During the times she could attend school, she was frequently distracted by working as a servant for a nearby family.

Annette was not regarded well by her peers. Few thought her attractive and many spoke of her mediocre intelligence. And she was frequently picked on for what many saw as mediocrity. She was slapped with the nickname of “goose” by a local priest in reference to her slowness.

In spite of a lack of support from her pastor — who thought she was unable to amount to much in life — Annette desired to give herself completely to God as a nun. But her slowness was cited as the cause for rejection when she applied to a religious order. The priest indicated that she was at least able to peel the community's

potatoes. The Sisters of St Dorothy in Vicenza, Italy, accepted her in 1904, bestowing her name Sister Maria Bertilla. As she told the mother superior, her only desire was “to become a saint.”

She was assigned to work in the kitchen, bakery and laundry. After some time Maria received nurses' training and began working in a hospital with children suffering from diphtheria. There the young nun seemed to find her true vocation: nursing very ill and disturbed children. As a missionary to the sick and marginalized, Sister Maria Bertilla found her calling. She was particularly drawn to assist those who were littlest and without much hope for survival. Her gifts to minister among those who suffered and were on the brink of death were readily acknowledged by the hospital's medical staff.

By 1915, the hospital was filled with military injured during World War I. Within a few years the hospital was on the front lines of battle. Sister Maria Bertilla wrote in her diary: “Here I am, Lord, to do your will whatever comes — be it life, death or terror.”

As the heaviest bombs were dropped in her city, Sister Maria Bertilla willingly chose to stay at the wounded's bedside, particularly with those who could not move. She was a comforting presence, bringing snacks and praying with them. Some of the injured to whom she ministered were present for her beatification and canonization.

When World War I brought one of its bloodiest battle lines to the doorsteps of the hospital where she worked, in Treviso, she served the soldiers tirelessly, even risking her own life during bombing attacks to tend the wounded. Her reputation grew steadily — so much so, in fact, that a jealous superior took her out of the sick rooms and sent her back to work in the hospital's laundry. She obeyed with alacrity. But the head of her order heard about the mistreatment, and put St Bertilla in charge of the children's section of the hospital, a task she performed admirably for

the last three years of her short life.

Her life was marked by a willingness to go out in love and service to others, giving what she received little of, resigning her will in favour of God's. She died of a painful tumour at age 34 on October 20, 1922.

Her reputation for simplicity and devoted, caring hard work had left a deep impression on those who knew her. A memorial plaque placed on her tomb refers to her as "a chosen soul of heroic goodness ... an angelic alleviator of human suffering in this place." Crowds flocked to her first grave at Treviso. After a tomb was erected for her



at Vicenza, it became a pilgrimage site where several miracles of healing were said to have taken place.

In 1961, 39 years after her death, she was canonized by Pope John XXIII as a saint. The crowd in attendance included members of her family as well as

some of her patients. Her feast day is October 20

**Source: www.franciscanmedia.org;
www.regnumchristi.com/en;
www.simplycatholic.com**

**https://angelusnews.com;
www.catholic.org/saints ♦**

Continued from Page 27: St Nicholas of Tolentino

It was not uncommon for the devil to beat him cruelly, leaving him half-dead, his body covered with wounds. He was found more than once in this state in the cloister, where the evil one had dragged him. He became permanently maimed on account of these dire combats.

Never succeeding to overpower him with this type of ploy, the father of lies resorted to harassing him with temptations and scruples: he suggested that the Saint's penances did not please God, but were, instead, a burden to the community.

With his soul immersed in anguish, he saw Our Lord in a dream. To overcome his mistrust, Jesus reminded him of the miraculous proofs of love that He had given him throughout his life and assured him that his penances were pleasing to Him, revealing that the fear he was feeling was nothing "more than an artifice of satan and that your name has already been written in the book of life."

During his life, Nicholas is said to have received visions, including images of Purgatory, which friends ascribed to his lengthy fasts. Prayer for the souls in Purgatory was the



outstanding characteristic of his spirituality. Towards the end of his life he became ill, suffering greatly, but still continued the mortifications that had been part of his holy life. Nicholas died on September 10, 1305.

People began immediately to petition for

his canonization. Nicholas was canonized by Pope Eugene IV (also an Augustinian) on June 5, 1446. He was the first Augustinian friar to be canonized. At his canonization, Nicholas was credited with three hundred miracles, including three resurrections.

The remains of St Nicholas are preserved at the Shrine of Saint Nicholas in the Basilica di San Nicola da Tolentino in the city of Tolentino, province of Macerata in Marche, Italy. He is particularly invoked as an advocate for the souls in Purgatory, especially during Lent and the month of November. In many Augustinian churches, there are weekly devotions to St Nicholas on behalf of the suffering souls. November 2, All Souls' Day, holds special significance for the devotees of St. Nicholas of Tolentino.

**Source: www.catholic.org/saints/sain;
https://catholicmagazine.news ♦**

'Guided by God'

Thu Tam Hoang's journey from refugee to a life of giving



Thu Tam Hoang went from being a refugee herself to helping refugees and becoming a Maryknoll Lay Missioner in Cambodia

As a terrified 10-year-old girl, Thu Tam Hoang fled Saigon with her family as the South

Vietnamese capital was overrun in April 1975, the deafening sound of bombs and gunfire ringing in her ears as she scrambled onto an overcrowded barge on the Mekong River to the safety of international waters.

After a perilous voyage and a sea rescue by the US Navy, she and her family were taken to a refugee camp in the Philippines, before being flown to the barren US coral atoll of Wake Island, 3,700 kilometers northwest of Honolulu, under the US military's "Operation New Life" and then finally on to the United States, sponsored by friends of her diplomat father. "One minute, I was in Vietnam. The next minute, I was in the Philippines and then on to Wake Island, and the next thing you know, I'm in the US," says Hoang.

Half a century later, the 60-something proudly Vietnamese-American now working in Cambodia as a Maryknoll Lay Missioner, says she has always been one of the lucky ones, "guided by God's hand."

"Looking back at my journey of faith, my life journey, God's hand is in it all the time," she told UCA News. I felt like I am called. I don't know what I can do, but I am opening myself to wherever God calls me.

"If I could alleviate any kind of pain and suffering — even one person at a time — I will do that."

Her night-time escape from Vietnam inspired Hoang, still in college, to volunteer 35 years ago at a Vietnamese refugee camp in the Philippines run by the Daughters of Charity in desperate

need of Vietnamese-English translators. Her odyssey has been both physical and spiritual, leading her from being a refugee to working with refugees, and from being a Buddhist to converting first to the Baptist faith and then to Catholicism at the age of 30.

Maryknoll began in the US more than a century ago as an international Catholic missionary society.

The Lay Missioners are one of Maryknoll's four branches, formed in 1975 — the same year Hoang fled Vietnam — in response to the Second Vatican Council's call for greater lay involvement in the Church's mission work. The organization emerged from the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers and the Maryknoll Sisters. The fourth arm is the Maryknoll Affiliates.

Hoang works with churches in Cambodia, particularly assisting ethnic Vietnamese, Indonesian, and Filipino minority communities in the port city of Sihanoukville, located 215 kilometers southwest of Phnom Penh. She also has a particular interest in fighting human trafficking.

She was sent to Cambodia in January 2024 on a three-and-a-half-year mission, just a month after officially becoming a Maryknoll Lay Missioner.

The recent conflict between Cambodia and Thailand brought the memories of the final days of South Vietnam flooding back.

"I got very nervous when I heard about [the conflict]. It brought back all of this," she says.

There are about 25,000 Catholics in Cambodia, many of them ethnic Vietnamese. Before the Khmer Rouge seized power in 1975, there were about 100,000 Catholics. Many fled or were killed before starting to return after the UN intervention in 1992.

In a country facing strong demands on its budget, charities and NGOs such as Maryknoll, Caritas Cambodia, Missionaries of Charity, and Jesuit Service Cambodia play a critical role,





often at the community level.

After being called back from the Philippines and her first mission abroad more than three decades ago by her parents, Hoang returned to graduate school, where she completed her Master of Public Health from the Virginia Commonwealth University and went on to serve in the Texas and US governments in a range of positions, including working with refugees and immigrants.

But everything has led back to refugees and the disadvantaged.

"From an early age, there has always been this thought that I have always been very lucky, and I guess, I just felt I needed to do something about it because of this overwhelming sense of gratitude that I knew I was lucky," she says.

"It started even when I was in college, the last few years in college, when the whole world was looking at all this news and everything, how people were fleeing by boat, dying at sea, and all this stuff was going on."

She began raising money to help Vietnamese refugees in a camp run by the Daughters of Charity in Palawan, an island in the Philippines, at the end of the Sulu Archipelago, about 500 kilometers northeast of the Malaysian part of Borneo and 1,350 kilometers southeast of the Vietnamese mainland.

One of the sisters at the camp said they desperately needed Vietnamese-English translators to help the UNHCR interview unaccompanied minors and to be house mothers in group homes for those kids. So she went herself.

That was 35 years ago, and she was still a college student in her twenties, but the experience fueled her passion for helping those in desperate straits.

Hoang's other journey has been spiritual, from Buddhist to Baptist to Catholic. And equally as long and fascinating.

Soon after her family arrived in the US in 1975, their sponsors came by with Christmas presents. Among the toys and sporting goods were

two books. Because the kids could not yet speak English, they were put away in the basement.

A few years later, and by now a voracious reader with good English, Hoang found one. It was an illustrated children's Bible. She was fascinated by the pictures and stories.

"And then, you know, I started praying. I would kneel in front of my bed every night, praying to this God even though I didn't even know who he was," she says.

But her mother found it hidden under the mattress.

"Oh, my gosh! I got a good whipping," she recalls.

Over the years, Hoang has looked at the Baptist faith, even being baptized. But she also kept going to Catholic Mass and looking deeper into issues such as the role of priests, before becoming a Catholic at the age of 30.

In a world that can often seem overwhelmed by conflict, poverty and despair, Hoang vividly remembers a lesson from Mother Theresa she came across by chance in a library during a retreat in El Paso, Texas.

"I just randomly pulled out this book by Mother Theresa," she recalls, emotionally. "And I happened to open it at this one page, just one sentence. And it still resonates with me.

"This is what sparked my current mission. Mother said something like: 'Yes, you are a drop in the ocean of water.'

"But it didn't stop there, like [the] normal [phrase]. Mother continued: 'But the ocean would miss that drop of water.'

"If I ever feel discouraged because 'I'm a drop in the ocean of water,' I know that that drop means something.

"It helps you to humble yourself in the midst of a world of problems. I may not be doing something great. But great in people's eyes is not the same as great in God's eyes.

"Don't give up. Never think that that drop of water means nothing."

**Source: UCA News dailynews@ucanews.com
11.09.2025 ♦**



Misdeeds of the clergy 'cannot be kept in a drawer': Pope Leo XIV

In a meeting with bishops appointed in the last year, Pope Leo XIV exhorted them to address issues related to inappropriate behavior on the part of the clergy: "They can't be put away in a drawer."

At the end of his Sept. 11 morning address to the prelates participating in the formation course organized by the Holy See, the Holy Father engaged them in a fraternal dialogue, giving them the opportunity to convey their concerns and worries.

The pontiff offered an overview of the challenges and issues bishops face at the beginning of a new ministry, such as fear, a sense of unworthiness, and the different expectations each had for their lives before being called.

Don't be frightened by the first difficulty

As the Vatican noted in a statement released Sept. 12, the Holy Father also offered the bishops some valuable advice: "Remain close to the Lord, set aside time for prayer, and continue to live out unconditional trust in the Holy Spirit, the origin of one's vocation."

He also exhorted them to be persevering disciples "who do not allow themselves to be frightened by the first difficulty; pastors close to the people and to priests, merciful and firm, even when it is a matter of making a judgment; capable of listening and dialogue, not just preaching sermons."

Pope Leo XIV also emphasized the value of the pastoral and human experience acquired in a local Church, which must be developed in a new ministry that puts bishops in touch with the universality of the Church.

The pope emphasized to the new bishops the value of witness and the ability to stay in touch with the world as they respond to questions that people are asking today about the meaning of life and evil in the world. "The answers learned 25 years ago in the

seminary are not enough," he pointed out.

Regarding synodality, the Holy Father — who headed the Dicastery for Bishops — explained that it is not a pastoral method but rather "a style of Church, of listening and of common search for the mission to which we are called."

"Be builders of bridges," he said. He also asked them to value the role of the laity, integrating it into the life of the Church and to an "unarmed and disarming" peace because "peace is a challenge for all!"

Inappropriate behaviour cannot be 'put away in a drawer'

Before answering questions, Pope Leo XIV encouraged the bishops to promptly address issues related to inappropriate behavior on the part of the clergy: "They cannot be put away in a drawer; they must be addressed with a sense of mercy and true justice toward the victims and the accused."

The pontiff thanked the new bishops for accepting the ministry: "I pray for you; the Church appreciates your 'yes'; you are not alone; together we bear the burden and together we proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ."

Prudence on social media

In response to questions posed by the bishops, the Holy Father spoke of the need to be prudent in the use of social media, where the risk is that "everyone feels authorized to say whatever he wants, even things that are false." He added: "There are times when getting to the truth is painful, but necessary."

He encouraged the bishops to use communications professionals who are trained in the field, offering three specific pieces of advice: "Keep calm, use sound judgment, and seek the help of a professional."

----- www.catholicnews.com ♦

Holy Father's Prayer Intentions

September 2025 :

For our relationship with all of creation Let us pray that, inspired by Saint Francis, we might experience our interdependence with all creatures who are loved by God and worthy of love and respect.

October 2025

For collaboration between different religious traditions Let us pray that believers in different religious traditions might work together to defend and promote peace, justice, and human fraternity.

MISSION *Prayer*

Lord Jesus, You are the Light that shines in our darkness,
Send us as heralds of hope to the ends of the earth.
May our words speak peace, and our lives reflect Your love.
Strengthen us in faith, bold in witness, and constant in prayer.

Like Moses, may we lift our hands in intercession for the world.
Like Timothy, may we proclaim Your Word with courage.
Like the widow in the parable, may we persevere in justice and mercy.

Bless missionaries who serve in distant and difficult places.
Let our hearts burn with zeal, our hands extend with compassion,
That all may encounter You, the Living Hope of the world.



MISSION SUNDAY '25



19 OCTOBER

**Celebrate!
Participate!
Promote!
Give!**



HOW?

- ✓ Participate in the Holy Mass.
- ✓ Pray for missionaries.
- ✓ Educate and raise awareness.
- ✓ Support financially.
- ✓ Engage in local mission activities.
- ✓ Reflect on your call to mission.
- ✓ Join our Mission Societies.

Most Rev. Dr. Ambrose Pitchaimuthu
Bishop of Vellore
National Director, PMO India

- THE SOCIETY FOR THE PROPAGATION OF THE FAITH
- THE MISSIONARY CHILDHOOD ASSOCIATION
- THE SOCIETY OF SAINT PETER THE APOSTLE
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