



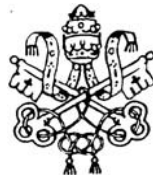
Mission Sunday Letter

Please remember the Mission of the Church in your daily prayer and be as generous as possible to this year's Mission Sunday collection. In your name, Missio Scotland will continue to give glory to God through your service to His people.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "P.N. McGuire", with a horizontal line underneath.

P.N. McGuire sma
National Director for the Propagation of the Faith.



To be read at all Masses

18th October 2009

MISSIO Scotland,
Pontifical Mission Societies
St. Andrew's, 4 Laird Street, Coatbridge, ML5 3LJ
Reg. Charity No. SCO 14858

“The Son of Man himself did not come to be served but to serve,”

Mission Sunday for me has become a time to “take stock” not just of what I do within Missio, but more importantly to re-examine my response to the Gospel as a priest and missionary. I confess that I am seldom happy with my reflection. There is always so very much more needing to be done. Thankfully the Good Lord sometimes gives us a glimpse of what He can achieve when we follow His lead.

One such blessed moment came in West Africa at Easter while visiting a leprosy settlement. The community leaders happily led me through their new school, rice mill, clinic and on to their pride and joy - the new church which had been funded mainly through help from Scotland. I had the honour of celebrating Holy Mass attended by the whole village. When I had almost completed the distribution of Holy Communion I was led to the backbenches of the Church where the most profoundly sick waited patiently for me.

One elderly lady held out her hand to receive the Lord. Wearing an old and dusty dress, clearly she had come straight from working on her farm. Her face was lined with the pain of her illness and of her efforts to feed herself and her grandchildren. Placing the precious host into her calloused hands where only stumps of fingers remained, I was moved to look into her face. As she held the Lord, I saw the lines on her face disappear. She radiated a smile that somehow reflected the purity of the bread, the very body of the Lord. She seemed to be transformed and, for the briefest moment, I felt what Jesus must have felt so often in his life and his words in today’s Gospel took on a whole new reality for me – he came to serve.

Mission is His gift, we are but His instruments.

In the message to us for Mission Sunday the Holy Father says, “ I wish to confirm once more that the task of evangelising all people constitutes the *essential* mission of the Church”. Without a word one elderly lady reminded me of the value of that Mission. We feed the hungry, heal the sick, we uphold human dignity, but even more importantly we offer the supreme gift of Jesus himself, the servant and the “Throne of Grace”.

Lying at the heart of the Church is the unique function of Missio that of ministering Christ himself to all his people in their particular need.

I am acutely aware of the generosity of my fellow Catholics and of their trust in Missio to make the best use of the resources that they give us. We never forget the sacrifices that are made in order to share our faith in practical ways with those most in need. Many agencies help magnificently but none in the unique way of Missio. This is the Church itself, you and I, the body of Christ reaching out to serve as he did.

Those actively involved in Mission areas are but your representatives, carrying your faith and witness to places that most of us cannot go.

Mission Sunday is the only day in the year when the whole Church, world wide, gathers in prayer to support its “Missionaries” and to help sustain your efforts to serve in the way that Jesus instructed his disciples.

Last year despite economic difficulties you entrusted £500,884 to Missio. This enabled us to serve the most needy in Ghana, Nigeria, Congo, Tanzania, Sudan, India and the Philippines. Scots Catholics quite literally spanned the globe with their generosity and faith.

Once more you have helped restore to the poor their human dignity; you have worked together with local communities empowering them to direct their own future and allowed them to experience the Lord by your response to their need.

I continue to remind those who have been assisted by Missio, that it is the people of Scotland who make this possible. Now on their behalf, I have the opportunity to express their and my own very inadequate “Thank you” for your faith and love.

I offer Mass this day in thanksgiving for the generosity of the Church in Scotland.