



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS TO PARTICIPANTS IN THE ASSEMBLY OF THE PONTIFICAL MISSION SOCIETIES

*Clementine Hall
Saturday, 4 June 2016*

[Multimedia]

Your Eminence, Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate and in the Priesthood, Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I welcome all of you, National Directors of the Pontifical Mission Societies and co-workers of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples. I thank Cardinal Fernando Filoni for the words he addressed to me, and all of you for your valuable service to the Church's mission to bring the Gospel "to the whole creation" (Mk 16:15).

This year our meeting is taking place on the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Pontifical Missionary Union (PMU). The work was inspired by Blessed Paolo Manna, a missionary priest of the Pontifical Institute for Foreign Missions [PIME]. Promoted by St Guido Maria Conforti, it was approved by Pope Benedict XV on 31 October 1916; and 40 years later the Venerable Pius XII raised it to the status of "Pontifical". Through the intuition of Blessed Paolo Manna and the mediation of the Apostolic See, the Holy Spirit has led the Church to have a greater awareness of her missionary nature that was brought to maturity by the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council.

Blessed Paolo Manna understood very well that to form and educate people for the mystery of the Church and her intrinsic missionary vocation is an objective that concerns the entire holy People of God, in the different states of life and ministries. "Concerning the tasks facing the Missionary Union, some of them are of a cultural nature and others are of a spiritual nature, still others are practical and of an organizational nature. The Missionary Union has the duty to enlighten, inflame and work to organize priests and through them the faithful in order to prepare them for the missions". These were the words of the Founder of the Pontifical Missionary Union, expressed in a historic speech at the second International Congress of the Work in 1936. However, forming bishops and priests for the mission did not mean reducing the Pontifical Missionary Union to a

simple clerical reality, but to support the hierarchy in its service to the missionary outreach of the Church, inherent to everyone: the faithful and their pastors, married people and consecrated virgins, the universal Church and particular Churches. By implementing this service with their own charity, Pastors maintain the Church always and everywhere in a state of mission, which is always ultimately the work of God, in which all believers participate by virtue of Baptism, Confirmation and the Eucharist.

Dear National Directors of the Pontifical Mission Societies, the mission builds up the Church and keeps her faithful to the saving will of God. For this reason, while it is important that you worry about the collection and allocation of the funds that you diligently administer in favour of the many churches and many needy Christians, a service for which I thank you, I urge you not to limit yourself to this aspect alone. We need “mystique”. We need to grow in evangelizing passion. I am afraid — let me be frank — that your work is very organizational, perfectly organizational, but lacks passion. This can even make it an NGO, but you are not an NGO! Without passion your Union is not needed; without “mystique” it is not useful. And if we have to sacrifice something, let us sacrifice the organization, let us move forward with the mystique of the Saints. Today, your missionary Union needs this: the mystique of the Saints and Martyrs. And this generous work of ongoing formation for the mission is what you must undertake; which is not just an intellectual course, but intrinsic to this wave of missionary passion, of the martyrs’ witness.

The recently founded Churches — which you help with ongoing missionary formation — can transmit to the older established Churches, which are sometimes burdened by their history and a bit tired, the ardour of a young faith and the witness of Christian hope, sustained by the admirable courage of martyrdom. I encourage you to serve the Churches with great love, the Churches which, thanks to the martyrs, witness to us how the Gospel makes us participants in the life of God, and do so through attraction not proselytism.

In this Holy Year of Mercy, the missionary zeal that consumed Blessed Paolo Manna, and from which the Pontifical Missionary Union sprang, still continues today to kindle, excite, renew, rethink and reform the service that this Work is called to offer to the whole Church. Your Union must not be the same next year: it has to change in this direction, it must be reshaped by this missionary passion. While we thank the Lord for your one hundred years, I hope that the passion for God and for the mission of the Church will lead the Pontifical Missionary Union to also rethink — in docility to the Holy Spirit — in the perspective of an appropriate reform of its methods, an appropriate reform: namely conversion and reform, so as to implement authentic renewal for the good of ongoing formation for the mission of all the Churches. With gratitude, we entrust your service to the Virgin Mary, Queen of the Missions, and to the Sts Peter and Paul, St Guido Maria Conforti and Blessed Paolo Manna. I cordially bless you and ask you please to pray for me, that I may not drift into “blissful stillness”; that I too may have missionary zeal to move forward.

Let us now pray the *Angelus* together.

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