



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF POPE FRANCIS TO PARTICIPANTS IN THE MEETING OF THE PONTIFICAL MISSION SOCIETIES

*Clementine Hall
Friday, 9 May 2014*

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

I welcome the National Directors of the Pontifical Mission Societies and collaborators of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples. I thank Cardinal Fernando Filoni and all of you who serve of the Church's mission to bring the Gospel to peoples all over the Earth.

With the Apostolic Exhortation [*Evangelií gaudium*](#) I wished to invite all the faithful to a new season of evangelization; and in our time the *missio ad gentes* is also the fundamental dynamism of the Church's outreach. The eagerness to evangelize to the "ends", as witnessed to by holy and generous missionaries, helps all communities to create an outgoing and effective pastoral ministry, a renewal of structures and works. Missionary outreach is paradigmatic for all the Church's activity (cf. [*Evangelií gaudium*](#), n. 15).

Evangelizing at this time of great social transformation requires a missionary Church impelled to go forth, capable of discerning how to deal with various cultures and man's visions. Because a world in transformation needs a Church renewed and transformed by contemplation and personal contact with Christ, through the power of the Spirit. The Spirit of Christ is the source of renewal, for he enables us to discover new paths, new creative methods, various forms of expression for the evangelization of the present world. It is he who gives us the strength to undertake the missionary journey, and the joy of proclaiming the Gospel so that the light of Christ may enlighten all those who still do not know him or have rejected him. This requires of us the courage "to reach all the

‘peripheries’ in need of the light of the Gospel” (*Evangelii gaudium*, n. 20). Neither our weaknesses, nor our sins, nor the many obstacles that are placed in the way of witnessing and proclaiming the Gospel can hold us back. The experience of an encounter with the Lord is what spurs us on and gives us the joy of announcing him to all peoples.

The Church, which is missionary by her nature, carries out the service of charity to all as a fundamental prerogative. Universal fraternity and solidarity are connatural to her life and to her mission in the world and for the world. Evangelization, which must reach everyone, is nevertheless called to begin with the least, with the poor, with those who are weighed down by the burden and strain of life. In so doing the Church prolongs the mission of Christ himself, who “came in order that they may have life, and have it abundantly” (Jn 10:10). The Church is the people of the Beatitudes, the home of the poor, of the afflicted, of the excluded and persecuted, of those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. You are asked to work and endeavour so that the ecclesial community may be ready to receive the poor with preferential love, keeping the doors of the Church open so that all may enter and find refuge therein.

The Pontifical Mission Societies are the privileged instrument which draws attention to and generously takes care of the *missio ad gentes*. Therefore, I turn to you who are inspirers and educators of the missionary conscience of the local Churches, who promote missionary co-responsibility with patient perseverance. There is a great need for priests, consecrated people and lay faithful who, gripped by the love of Christ, are branded by passion for the Kingdom of God and who are ready to set out on the way of evangelization.

I thank you for your most valuable service, which is dedicated to spreading the Kingdom of God so that the love and light of Christ may reach every corner of the Earth. May Mary, the Mother of the living Gospel, accompany you on your journey of promoting evangelization. May my blessing also accompany you and your collaborators also accompany you. Thank you.