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To the Pontifical Missionary Works: continuing formation in the mission of all Churches

Vatican City, 4 June 2016 – The meeting of the Holy Father with the participants in the assembly of the Pontifical Missionary Works takes place this year on the centenary of the foundation of the Pontifical Missionary Union, inspired by Blessed Paolo Manna, a missionary priest of the Pontifical Institute of Foreign Missions that, with the backing of St. Guido Maria Conforti, was approved by Benedict V on 31 October 1916 and qualified as "Pontifical" by Pius XII forty years later.

The Pope highlighted that Blessed Paolo Manna had understood very clearly that forming and educating in the ministry of the Church and its inherent missionary vocation is an aim that should be shared by all the holy people of God, in their different states of life and ministries. Therefore, the formation of bishops and priests in the mission does not mean reducing the Pontifical Missionary Union to a merely clerical reality, but rather supporting the hierarchy in its service to the missionary nature of the Church, in all her members. "Performing this service with the charity proper to them, pastors keep the Church in a state of mission, always and everywhere. This latter is, in the final analysis, the work of God, and through Baptism, Confirmation and the Eucharist, all the faithful participate."

Addressing the national directors of the Pontifical Missionary Works, he stressed that "the mission makes the Church, and keeps her faithful to the salvific will of God." For this reason, he continued, "while it is important to be concerned with the collection and distribution of economic assistance that you diligently administer in favour of many churches and Christians in need – and for this I thank you – I exhort you not to limit yourselves to this aspect. Generous work of continuing formation in the mission, addressed to all, lay faithful, pastors, Churches young and old, represents the heart of your commitment, carried out with the intention of serving and nurturing the missionary identity of the entire Church. Recently founded Churches, assisted by your for their continuing missionary formation, can transmit to the more ancient Churches, at times weary and burdened by their history, the zeal of young faith and the witness of Christian hope, sustained by the admirable courage of martyrdom. I encourage you to serve with great love the Churches that, thanks to the martyrs, bear witness of how the Gospel renders us participants in the life of God, and does so by attraction and not by proselytism."

"In this Holy Year of Mercy, may the missionary zeal which consumed Blessed Paolo Manna, and from which the Pontifical Missionary Union was born, continue to inflame, impassion, renew, rethink and reform the service that the Pontifical Missionary Works are called to offer to the Church as a whole. While we thank the Lord for these

hundred years, I hope that the passion for God and for the mission of the Church may lead the Pontifical Missionary Union also to reconsider itself in the docility of the Holy Spirit, with a view to a timely reform of its working methods and an authentic renewal for the good of the continuing formation of the mission of all the Churches", concluded Pope Francis.
