



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO THE NATIONAL DIRECTORS
OF THE PONTIFICAL MISSION SOCIETIES**

*Clementine Hall
Friday, 11 May 2012*

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

I extend my cordial greeting to all of you, starting with Cardinal Fernando Filoni, Prefect of the [Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples](#), whom I thank for his kind words and information concerning the work of the [Pontifical Mission Societies](#). I express a grateful thought to Archbishop Savio Hon Tai-Fai, Secretary, to Archbishop Piergiuseppe Vacchelli, Adjunct Secretary and President of the [Pontifical Mission Societies](#), to the National Directors and to all collaborators, as well as to those who devote their generous service to this Dicastery. My thoughts and all of yours go at this time to Fr Massimo Cenci, PIME Undersecretary, who died unexpectedly. May the Lord reward him for all his work done on mission and at the service of the Holy See.

Today's meeting takes place in the context of the Annual Assembly of the Supreme Committee of the Pontifical Mission Societies, to which is entrusted the missionary cooperation of all the Churches in the world.

Evangelization, which is always an urgent matter, in these times is compelling the Church to work more expeditiously along the paths of the world, to lead every human being to the knowledge of Christ. Only in the Truth, in fact, can humanity discover the meaning of existence, and grow in justice and peace. Every man and woman, every people, has the right to receive the Gospel of Truth. In this regard, your role in the celebration of the Year of Faith, already close at hand, assumes a special kind of meaning, to reinforce commitment to spreading the Kingdom of God

and the knowledge of the Christian faith. This requires from those who have already encountered Jesus Christ “an authentic and renewed conversion to the Lord, the one Saviour of the world” (Apostolic Letter *Porta Fidei*, n. 6). Christian communities “too need to hear anew the voice of the Bridegroom, who invites them to conversion, spurs them on to bold new undertakings and calls forth their commitment to the great task of the ‘new evangelization’” (John Paul II Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Europa*, n. 23).

Jesus, the Incarnate Word, is always the centre of proclamation, the reference point for the *sequela* and for some methodology of the mission of evangelization, because he is the human face of God who wants to meet every man and woman to allow them to enter into communion with God, into his love. To walk the highways of the world to proclaim the Gospel to all peoples of the earth and lead them to the meeting with the Lord, (cf. Apostolic Letter *Porta Fidei*, n. 7) therefore requires the announcer to have a personal and daily relationship with Christ, to know him and to love him deeply. Today the mission needs to renew trust in the action of God; it needs intense prayer so that His Kingdom will be done on earth as in heaven. We need to invoke light and strength from the Holy Spirit, and to commit ourselves with determination, decision and generosity to usher in, in a sense, “a new era of proclamation of the Gospel... because, after two millennia, a major part of the human family still does not acknowledge Christ, but also because the situation in which the Church and the world find themselves... is particularly challenging for religious belief” (John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia*, n. 29).

I am therefore very pleased to encourage the project of the *Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples* and the *Pontifical Mission Societies* in supporting the Year of Faith. This project provides for a worldwide campaign, which, through the prayer of the Holy Rosary, will accompany the work of evangelizing the world and, for many of the baptized to rediscover and deepen the faith.

Dear friends, as you know only too well, the proclamation of the Gospel on not a few occasions has entailed difficulty and suffering; the growth of the Kingdom of God in the world, in fact, often comes at the cost of the blood of its servants. In this phase of economic, cultural and political change, where often the human being feels alone, in the grip of anguish and despair, the Gospel messengers, even though they proclaim hope and peace, continue to be persecuted as was their Master and Lord. But, despite the problems and the tragic reality of persecution, the Church is not discouraged, she remains faithful to her Lord's command in the awareness that “throughout Christian history, martyrs, that is, ‘witnesses’, have always been numerous and indispensable to the spread of the Gospel” (John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, n. 45). The message of Christ, today, as in the past, cannot adapt to the logic of this world, because it is prophecy and deliverance, it is the seed of a new humanity that is growing, and which only at the end of time will have its full realization. To you is entrusted in a special way, the task of supporting the ministers of the Gospel, helping them to “preserve the delightful and comforting joy of evangelizing, even when it is in tears that we must sow” (Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, n. 80). Your special commitment is to keep alive the missionary vocation of all Christ's disciples, so that each of you,

according to the charism you have received from the Holy Spirit, can take part in the universal mission given by the Risen Lord to his Church. Your work of animation and missionary formation is the soul of pastoral care, because the *missio ad gentes* is the paradigm of all the Church's apostolic action. Be increasingly a visible and concrete expression of the communion of people and means between the Churches, which, like communicating vessels, live the same vocation and missionary zeal, and in every corner of the world work to sow the Word of Truth in all peoples and cultures. I am sure you will continue to commit yourselves, so that the local Churches assume, always more generously, their share of responsibility in the Church's universal mission.

May the Virgin Mary, Queen of the Missions, accompany you and support all your hard work in promoting awareness and missionary cooperation. With this hope, which I always keep in my prayers, I thank you and all those who cooperate in the cause of evangelization, and I cordially impart the Apostolic Blessing to each of you.