

World Mission Sunday 2022

You shall be my witnesses

Acts 1:8

Dear brothers and sisters,

In today's gospel we see Jesus turning things upside down.

He condemns the seemingly upright and law-abiding Pharisee and praises the tax-collector, the sinner. It is the tax-collector, Jesus says, who goes home at rights with God and who shows what true prayer and faith are.

The reason for this is that God accepts the prayers of a sincere heart. He hears the cry of the poor who call to him in their distress, the supplication of the orphan and widow, the prayer of the humble. As we heard in the responsorial psalm, he is close to the broken-hearted.

One of the ways in which God responds to the pleas of the poor and those whom the world forgets is through the Church, through us.

Here in Scotland, we see that care for others shown by the St Vincent de Paul Society, parish-run foodbanks, Catholic Justice and Peace groups, SPUC and many other Catholic organisations. That is the kind of true witness which Pope Francis is constantly asking us to demonstrate, where we, as Church, reach out to those in our society who are in need.

To bring relief and support to our brothers and sisters in poorer countries abroad, Scottish Catholics contribute their prayers and money through the Church's two official Catholic overseas charities, SCIAF and Missio. SCIAF supports communities affected by natural disasters, war and poverty. Missio brings help to the Church in countries where it is small or financially poor. It is through our prayers and donations on Mission Sunday that we give witness to the fact that the Church is a family, a family where we look after one another. Jesus put it very clearly when he said: "By this love you have for one another, everyone will know that you are my disciples" (Jn 13:35).

"You shall be my witnesses" (Acts 1:8) is one of the last things the Risen Jesus said to his disciples and Pope Francis focuses on that phrase in his message for this World Mission Sunday.

We are loved by Jesus in a way which is uniquely personal and he has called us individually to witness to him. However, the Holy Father points out that, more importantly, we have also been called collectively. We must bear witness as a body, as a community. To emphasise this point, Pope Francis recalls Jesus final prayer at the Last Supper: *"May they all be one, as you, Father, and I are one. May they be so completely one that the world will believe it was you who sent me"* (Jn 17:20-21). By being united and caring for one another, then, we bear witness to Jesus and indeed to

the Trinity. Our unity mirrors that of the Son and the Father. It is in this way that Christ can touch the lives and hearts of those in need in our society and those far away. It is through us that he can comfort, heal, and raise up our brothers and sisters.

This year Missio hopes to fund many different projects in mission countries but we wish to draw special attention to two projects in Ethiopia. We are appealing for funds to help the Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady extend a school they run to educate children with disabilities. The sisters have been working in the country since 1899. The second project is to help the people of St Peter and St Paul's parish in Homecho complete the building of their church. That parish church will become a hub for the wider community. You can read more about these in the Missio magazine.

The most recent statistics show that while Catholics only make up 1% of the population of Ethiopia, the Catholic Church provides up to 80% of social care in that country. The Church in Ethiopia is able to do that because of the support they receive from Catholics all over the world, from people like yourselves. It is in this way that we can participate in and share in the joy of the Church's mission.

World Mission Sunday is celebrated in every parish in every country throughout the world on this day. It is a moment when we can be aware that we are not just part of a parish or a diocese but of a world-wide community of people bonded to Christ and bearing witness to him.

Today, Pope Francis asks each of us to be generous with our prayers and donations for our communities who need our support and wishes to thank you for your support over the years.

Wishing you and your parish the unity and joy of God.

Yours sincerely in Christ,

Fr Vincent Lockhart

National Director
Missio Scotland – The Pontifical Mission Societies