

March
2026

South Africa,
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Our Mission

Missio-SACBC





March
2026



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Our Mission

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From the Editor ...



2026 marks the centenary of World Mission Sunday. The theme chosen by Pope Leo for this year is “One in Christ, united in mission.” This is more than a slogan. It is a reminder of our identity. Mission doesn’t begin with plans, structures, or activity. It begins with an encounter - with

Christ who draws us into communion, and with one another as members of his Body.

That call to unity speaks directly into the reality of our time. We live in a world shaped by division, suspicion, and competing voices. These tensions can easily find their way into our communities and even into our Church. It is tempting to respond by organising better or doing more. Yet the Gospel points us in another direction. It calls us to conversion. It asks us to return to Christ as the centre of our lives, because without that centre, our efforts lose their depth and direction.

Unity, however, is never static. It is always for the sake of mission. Jesus prays that we may be one “so that the world may believe” (Jn 17:21). When our lives reflect communion, they become a sign that faith is real and that hope is possible. Each baptised person shares in this responsibility. Mission is not the task of a few. It belongs to all of us.

This edition also highlights a truth that must never be overlooked: mission is rooted in love. It is not first about programmes or initiatives, necessary as they may be. It is about making God’s love visible in everyday life. A word of encouragement, a willingness to listen, a gesture of welcome - these are often the places where the Gospel is first experienced. They are the beginnings of transformation.

The reflection on Easter hope strengthens this vision. In a wounded world, marked by conflict, inequality, and personal struggle, the Resurrection proclaims that darkness doesn’t have the final word. Christ is risen, and that changes everything. He enters into our reality and opens a path where none

seemed possible. To live as Easter people is to carry that hope into the ordinary circumstances of life and into the places where hope feels absent.

There is great reassurance in knowing that mission does not depend on perfection. The women who went to the tomb didn’t have a strategy. They acted out of love and fidelity. Yet they became the first witnesses of the Resurrection. Their experience reminds us that God works through simple acts offered with sincerity.

“Mission doesn’t begin with plans, structures, or activity. It begins with an encounter - with Christ who draws us into communion, and with one another as members of his Body.”

In this edition, we have included a special Mission Hymn inspired by the 2026 theme “*One in Christ, united in mission.*” Music has a way of reaching the heart where words alone cannot.

During this Easter season, we are also invited to reflect more deeply on vocation. On the Fourth Sunday of Easter, the Church celebrates the World Day of Prayer for Vocations, often known as Good Shepherd Sunday. It is a moment to remember that mission and vocation are inseparable. Each life is a response to God’s call. Each person is invited to discover how they are being sent. Some are called to priesthood or religious life. Others are called to marriage, family life, or dedicated service in the world. All are called to mission.

As we continue this centenary journey, the invitation is clear. Remain rooted in Christ. Live in a way that makes love visible. Allow the hope of Easter to shape every aspect of life. Mission begins there.

Yours in Mission,

Fr Jerry

One in Christ, United in Mission

Pope Leo XIV

The message of Pope Leo XIV for World Mission Sunday 2026 is both a call to renewal and a reminder of the Church's deepest identity. Marking the centenary of World Mission Day, he has chosen the theme: "One in Christ, united in mission." This theme is not just a catchy phrase; it expresses the very heart of what it means to be Church today.

At the beginning of his message the Pope situates the Church within a moment of grace following the Jubilee Year. He encourages the entire Church "to continue its missionary journey with joy and zeal in the Holy Spirit." This journey, however, is not sustained by activity alone. It requires "hearts united in Christ, reconciled communities and - a willingness to cooperate with generosity and trust." In other words, Mission begins not in strategy, but in conversion - in a renewed openness to grace.

One in Christ: the Foundation of Mission

The first and most essential point in the Pope's address is that mission flows from our union with Christ. He reminds us that before his Passion, Jesus prayed "that they may all be one" (Jn 17:21). This unity is not superficial or organisational; it is deeply spiritual, rooted in the very life of the Trinity. The Church is, therefore, a communion that "flows from the Trinity" and is sustained by it.



To be Christian, the Holy Father insists, is not primarily about following rules or holding ideas. It is "a life in union with Christ," like branches on the vine. From this living relationship comes all fruitfulness in mission. Echoing Saint John Paul II, he affirms that "communion represents both the source and the fruit of mission." Without this communion, mission loses its credibility and vitality.

**"Mission begins not in strategy,
but in conversion - in a renewed
openness to grace."**

This insight leads to a challenging but necessary truth: divisions within the Church weaken her witness. Pope Leo speaks candidly of "conflicts, polarization, misunderstandings and a lack of mutual trust," noting that these realities undermine evangelisation. When this occurs even within our communities, it undermines our witness.



The evangelising mission that Christ entrusted to his disciples requires, above all, hearts that are reconciled and eager for communion.

Such unity also extends beyond Catholic boundaries. The Pope highlights the importance of ecumenical efforts, especially in light of the 1700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea. Unity among Christians is not optional; it is essential for a credible proclamation of the Gospel.

“There is no true evangelisation if the name of Jesus of Nazareth is not proclaimed.”

At a personal level, unity begins with placing Christ at the centre. The Pope invites believers to echo Saint Paul: “It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me” (Gal 2:20). Through the Word, the Sacraments, and a life of faith, we become “living stones” in the Church. Authentic evangelisation, he insists, must always proclaim Christ clearly, for “there is no true evangelisation if the name of Jesus of Nazareth is not proclaimed.”

United in mission: a shared responsibility

The second major theme in Pope Leo’s address is that unity is always directed towards mission. Jesus’ prayer for unity has a purpose: “so that the world may believe” (Jn 17:21). A united Church becomes a living sign that draws others to faith.

Pope Leo recalls the vision of Blessed Paolo Manna: “The entire Church for the conversion of the whole world.” Mission is not the task of a few specialists; it belongs to all the baptised. “No baptized person is exempt from or indifferent to mission.” Each person, according to their vocation, participates in the mission of Christ.

This missionary responsibility is lived in a spirit of communion. Evangelisation, as Pope Francis often reminded the Church, is “harmonious, communal and synodal.” It involves cooperation, mutual support, **“Jesus’ prayer for unity has a purpose: “so that the world may believe” (Jn 17:21). A united Church becomes a living sign that draws others to faith.”**

and a willingness to recognise the gifts of others. The Pope encourages believers to “see our brothers and sisters through the eyes of faith,” to “embrace diversity as a treasure,” and to “bear one another’s burdens.”

Unity in mission does not mean uniformity. Rather, it is a “convergence of different charisms for the same purpose.” The richness of cultures, spiritualities, and expressions of faith becomes a strength when united in Christ. The Pope calls for “creative and concrete ways of cooperating” across institutions and communities, so that the Gospel may be proclaimed more effectively.

In this context, he expresses deep gratitude for the Pontifical Mission Societies, which foster missionary awareness and solidarity across the world. These societies are described as

“a living sign of unity and ecclesial missionary communion,” linking communities through prayer and charity. Their work reminds the Church that mission is always shared.

Mission to love: the heart of evangelization

The third aspect of the Pope’s message is the reminder that love is the essence of mission. “If unity is the condition of mission, love is its essence.” The Gospel is not an abstract message; it is “the Gospel of God’s faithful love,” made visible in Jesus Christ.

The Church’s mission, therefore, is to continue the mission of Christ - “a mission born of love, lived in love, and leading to love.” Jesus’ prayer reaches its fulfilment in this: “that the love with which you have loved me may be in them” (Jn 17:26). Mission is not simply about teaching or preaching; it is about making God’s love visible in the world.

Throughout history, this love has been embodied by countless witnesses - “martyrs, confessors and missionaries” - who gave their lives so that others might encounter Christ. Pope Leo pays special tribute to today’s missionaries who, like Saint Francis Xavier, leave everything behind to serve in difficult and often challenging contexts. Their witness reveals that “God’s love transcends all barriers.”

The Pope also emphasises the need for new missionary vocations. The Church must pray for “young people and adults who are willing to leave everything behind” to follow Christ. Missionary life is not a burden but a gift - a participation in the love of Christ that reaches to the ends of the earth.

Filled with admiration for men and women missionaries, I make a special appeal to the whole Church to join them in the mission of evangelization through the witness of our

lives in Christ, through prayer and through our contributions to the missions. As Saint Francis of Assisi said, “Love is not loved,” and we look to him in a special way on the eight hundredth anniversary of his passing to heaven. Let us find inspiration in his desire to live in the love of the Lord and to transmit it to those both near and far, because, as he said, “this love Who hath loved us much is much to be loved”

A concluding vision

The message concludes with a prayer that beautifully gathers all these themes: a prayer for unity in Christ, for courage in mission, and for the grace to embody God’s love. It is a vision of a Church that is deeply rooted in Christ, united in communion, and sent out with love. The Pope concludes: To foster spiritual communion, I give you my blessing with this simple prayer:

Holy Father, make us one in Christ, rooted in his love that unites and renews. May all members of the Church be united in mission, docile to the Holy Spirit, courageous in bearing witness to the Gospel, proclaiming and daily embodying your faithful love for all creatures. Bless all missionary men and women, support them in their efforts, and watch over them in hope! Mary, Queen of Missions, accompany our work of evangelization in every corner of the earth: make us instruments of peace, and grant that the whole world may recognize in Christ the light that saves. Amen.

Extracts from Pope LEO XIV messages for World Mission Day given on the 25th January 2026.



Easter Hope in a Wounded World



Fr Jerry Browne, National Director

There is a striking poem by Maya Angelou that has stirred hearts across generations. In it, she gives voice to a people who have known suffering, yet refuse to be defined by it. Angelou writes:

“Out of the huts of history’s shame,
I rise.
Up from a past that’s rooted in pain,
I rise.
I’m a black ocean, leaping and wide,
welling and swelling I bear in the tide.
Leaving behind nights of terror and fear,
I rise.
Into a daybreak that’s wondrously clear
I rise.
Bringing the gifts that my ancestors
gave, I am the dream and the hope of
the slave.
I rise
I rise

These powerful words speak of resilience, dignity, and hope. They echo a truth that lies at the very heart of the Christian faith: that from suffering and darkness, new life can emerge. That repeated refrain - “I rise” - echoes with particular depth in the heart of the Christian story. It finds its fullest meaning in the mystery we celebrate at Easter.

Easter proclaims the most transformative truth in human history: Jesus Christ is risen.

Death does not have the final word. Darkness is not the end of the story. In the Resurrection, God reveals that hope is stronger than despair, and love more powerful than hatred or fear. The empty tomb is not simply an event of the past. It is a living promise that continues to shape our present and open our future.

This is the hope we are called to carry into a wounded world.

Looking around us today, we see many signs of that woundedness. Communities are often fractured by division and distrust. Nations struggle under the weight of conflict and inequality. Families carry the quiet pain of misunderstanding and broken relationships. Many people walk through life burdened by loneliness, anxiety, or a sense of discouragement that is difficult to name.

Into this reality, the message of Easter speaks with clarity and tenderness. The risen Christ does not stand far from our struggles; he enters into them. He brings light into places of darkness and breathes life into situations that seem beyond repair. Easter reminds us that no situation is beyond the reach of God’s grace. It invites us to believe that healing is possible, that relationships can be restored, and that new life can emerge where we least expect it.

To be an Easter people, then, is not simply to celebrate a feast. It is to live a way of seeing and a way of being. It is to believe, even in difficult circumstances, that new life is possible. It is to choose hope when it would be easier to give in to despair. It is to become, in our own lives, signs of the Resurrection. This is where mission begins.

In his message for World Mission Sunday 2026, Pope Leo XIV reminds us that “mission begins with love.” These simple words carry profound meaning. Mission is not first about programmes or structures. It is not primarily about strategies or plans. It begins in the heart - in an encounter with the love of Christ that changes us and sends us outward.

When we experience that love, we cannot keep it to ourselves. It naturally reaches out, seeks connection, and desires to heal. Pope Leo speaks of the need for “hearts united in Christ” and for communities that are reconciled and open to one another. Such unity is not achieved through effort alone; it grows when we allow the love of Christ to shape our attitudes, our words, and our actions.

The Easter Gospel offers a beautiful image of this in the women who went to the tomb early on that first morning. They set out in the quiet of dawn with a simple intention: to honour Jesus in love. They were not expecting a miracle. There was no grand plan, they simply went early on the Sunday morning to anoint the body with spices and perfumes as a final act of love and devotion. Yet their fidelity placed them at the centre of the Resurrection story. They became the first witnesses and the first messengers of hope.

Their example speaks powerfully to our own time. Mission often begins in small, faithful acts. A kind word offered to someone who is struggling. A gesture of

welcome to a newcomer. A willingness to listen when another needs to be heard. These moments may seem ordinary, yet they carry within them the quiet power of the Resurrection.

Across our parishes and communities in South Africa, Botswana, and eSwatini, this spirit is alive. It is seen in those who reach out to the vulnerable, who build bridges where there has been division, and who create spaces of belonging in a fragmented world. In these simple acts of love, the risen Christ becomes visible.

Pope Leo reminds us that we are living in a “new missionary age” and calls the whole Church to “renew in ourselves the fire of our missionary vocation.” This renewal doesn’t begin elsewhere; it begins within us. It begins when we allow Easter to touch our own wounds, to restore our own hope, and to send us out with renewed courage.

To be missionaries today is to be bearers of hope. It is to stand in places of brokenness and quietly witness that God has not abandoned his people. It is to live in such a way that others can glimpse, through us, the possibility of new life.

Easter calls each of us to rise - to rise above indifference, to rise beyond fear, and to rise into a deeper life of faith and service. When we do so, something begins to change. The atmosphere of our homes, our parishes, and our communities is gradually transformed. The long night gives way to dawn.

As we celebrate this Easter season, may we hear again that quiet but powerful call: “I rise.” May it become not only a refrain we admire, but a truth we live. Strengthened by the love of Christ and sent by his Spirit, may we go forth as Easter people - bringing hope, healing, and love into a wounded world.

One in Christ, United in Mission

Missionary Hymn 2026

Words: Fr Jeremiah Browne

Music: Beethoven

D G Bm D A

Come, O peo - ple, lift your voi - ces, hearts re - joi - cing, let us praise.
Gath - ered here to seek His king - dom, faith u - nites us all as one.
When wounds mark our world with sor - row, let our hope in Christ re - new.
Sent to bring God's love to oth - ers, called to serve in ev - 'ry place.

D Bm G D

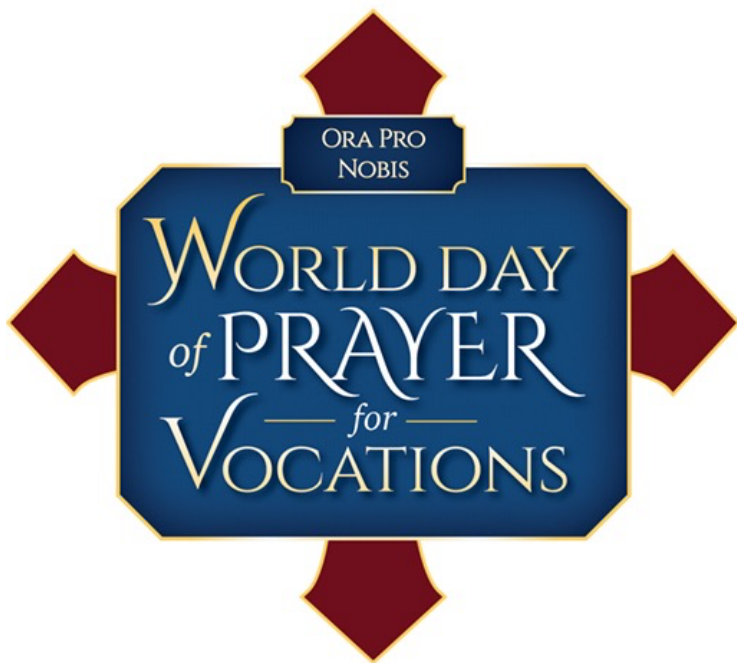
God has called us to His al - tar, to pro - claim His ho - ly ways.
Filled with God's e - ter - nal Spi - rit, may our hearts pro - claim his love.
Strengthened by the bread of hea - ven, gui - ded by the Spi - rit's pow'r.
Peace and jus - tice we will strive for, show - ing all the Fa - ther's face.

A D A D A F# Bm E A

One in Christ u - ni - ted in mi - ssion Joy and hope now fill our hearts.
One in Christ u - ni - ted in mi - ssion Light of Christ our path will be.
One in Christ u - ni - ted in mi - ssion May our lives re - flect God's light.
One in Christ u - ni - ted in mi - ssion Let us go where He will send.

D C G D A D

Lay - ing down our lives be - fore Him, let us off - er all we've got.
Shin - ing forth for all the na - tions, truth and grace and har - mo - ny.
Walk - ing forth in faith and cou - rage, spread - ing mer - cy far and wide.
Bring - ing light in - to the dark - ness, hope and joy and love a - gain.



The Interior Discovery of God's Gift

Each year, on the Fourth Sunday of Easter, the Church celebrates the World Day of Prayer for Vocations – also known as Good Shepherd Sunday. In his message for 2026, Pope Leo XIV invites us to rediscover vocation not as a task imposed from outside, but as a gift discovered within. He describes vocation as “the discovery of God’s free gift that blossoms in the depths of our hearts,” calling us into a deeper awareness of who we are in Christ and how we are sent in mission.

The Way of Beauty

The Holy Father begins with a striking insight: vocation is a path of beauty. Drawing from the Gospel image of Jesus as the Good Shepherd (cf. John 10:11), he reminds us that Christ reveals a life worth following – a life that is not only good, but deeply beautiful. Yet this beauty is not superficial. It is discovered through prayer, silence, and

contemplation. Only the one who pauses, listens, prays and welcomes the Shepherd’s gaze can say with confidence: “I trust him; life with him can truly be beautiful. I want to walk this path of beauty.” What is most extraordinary is that, in becoming his disciple, one truly becomes “beautiful”; his beauty transforms us.

This insight has profound missionary implications. When we encounter Christ personally, our lives begin to radiate something of His beauty. Vocation is not simply about doing something for God; it is about becoming someone in Christ. As the Pope notes, “the distinctive trait of the saint is the luminous spiritual beauty that radiates from his or her life in Christ.” Mission begins here—with lives transformed from within.

In light of this, Pope Leo invites everyone “in families, parishes and religious communities, as well as bishops, priests, deacons, catechists, educators and all the faithful – to commit themselves more fully to creating conditions that allow this gift to be embraced, nourished, protected and accompanied, so that it may bear abundant fruit.”

Mutual Awareness

The message then turns to the heart of relationship. Every vocation begins with the awareness that we are known and loved by God. “The Lord of life knows us and enlightens our hearts with his loving gaze.” This awareness, however, must be mutual. We are invited to come to know God in return—through prayer, Scripture, the Sacraments, and acts of charity.

The Holy Father recalls the story of the young Samuel (cf. 1 Samuel 3:1–10), who needed guidance to recognise the voice of the Lord. In the same way, we too must learn to listen. This requires creating space for silence in a world filled with noise. “A vocation entails an intimate dialogue with the

One who calls and invites us to respond, despite the deafening noise of the world, with true joy and generosity..”

The Pope encourages young people especially to “Listen to the voice of the Lord who invites you to a full and fruitful life, calling you to put your talents to use (cf. Mt 25:14-30) and to unite your limitations and weaknesses with the glorious cross of Christ.” Through practices such as Eucharistic adoration, meditation on the Word, and active participation in the life of the Church, we come to know the Lord - and in knowing Him, discover our path.

Trust

From awareness grows trust. Vocation is not always clear or comfortable. It often unfolds in uncertainty. For this reason, trust is essential. The Holy Father presents Saint Joseph as a model of vocational faith. Faced with confusion and unexpected events, Joseph chose to trust in God’s plan. “In every situation, Joseph declared his own ‘fiat’, like those of Mary at the Annunciation and Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane.”

Trust means surrendering control. It means believing that God is at work even when we do not understand. “We must overcome fears and doubts, confident that the Lord of history - both of the world and of our own personal story - is risen. He does not abandon us in our darkest hours, but comes to dispel every shadow with his light.

Maturation

Finally, the Pope reminds us that vocation is not a once-off event, but a lifelong journey. It is a process of maturation. The Pope reminds us that “Like the vine and the branches (cf. Jn 15:1-8), our whole lives must be rooted in a strong and vital bond with the Lord, so that we may more wholeheartedly respond to his call through our trials and necessary “pruning.”

He goes on to say that “A vocation is not an immediate possession... it is a path that unfolds



much like life itself.” Vocation develops over time - through relationships, through challenges, and through faithful daily living.

The Holy Father emphasises the importance of accompaniment. No one discerns alone. Spiritual guides, supportive communities, and authentic friendships are all part of the journey. Equally important is the daily nurturing of our relationship with God. “Pause, listen and entrust yourselves,” he urges.

At its heart, this message is a call to rediscover vocation as a gift to be received, cherished, and shared. Every vocation - whether to marriage, priesthood, consecrated life, or lay missionary service - is “an immeasurable gift for the Church and for those who receive it with joy.”

For the Pontifical Mission Societies, this message resonates deeply. Mission begins not with strategy, but with encounter. It grows through trust. It matures through faithful living. In a world searching for meaning, the witness of lives rooted in Christ becomes a powerful proclamation of the Gospel.

Pope Leo concludes by encouraging with a prayer “May the Virgin Mary, model of the interior acceptance of divine gifts and expert in prayerful listening, always accompany you on this journey!”



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Pontifical *Mission* Societies 2026

South Africa
Botswana,
eSwatini

Loving God

send us out as joyful missionary disciples,

One in Christ, united in mission.

Renew our passion and love for
the Gospel and for one another,
so that the world may know
Your saving love.

Amen



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