

# **PONTIFICAL MISSION SOCIETIES: OVERVIEW AND INFORMATION FOR RETREAT**

## **FAQ**

### **What are the Pontifical Mission Societies?**

The Pontifical Mission Societies consist of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, the Missionary Childhood Association, the Society of St. Peter Apostle and the Missionary Union of Priests and Religious.

### **What do these organizations do?**

The Pontifical Mission Societies have, as their primary purpose, the promotion of a universal missionary spirit — a spirit of prayer and sacrifice — among all baptized Catholics. The first three Societies, in carrying out that goal, invite baptized Catholics to express their missionary commitment by offering their prayers, personal sacrifices and financial support for the work of the Church in the Missions. The Missionary Union of Priests and Religious works to deepen mission awareness among priests, men and women Religious, catechists, and educators so that they are fully prepared to take on the mission formation of the faithful.

### **What does the term “pontifical” mean?**

The four Societies each received the title “pontifical” in 1922 to indicate their status as official instruments of the Holy Father and of the Universal Roman Catholic Church.

### **Where are the Pontifical Mission Societies located?**

National offices exist in more than 120 countries around the world including the United States. Central administrative offices are located in Rome, Italy, under the direction of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples. Cardinal Fernando Filoni is the Prefect of the Congregation.

The USA headquarters address is 70 West 36<sup>th</sup> Street, 8<sup>th</sup> floor, New York, NY 10018

### **What makes the Pontifical Mission Societies unique from other mission organizations?**

According to the teaching of Vatican Council II, the Pontifical Mission Societies are institutions of the Universal Church and of each local church. Therefore, unlike any other mission organization, the Pontifical Mission Societies are both Pontifical and Episcopal in nature. And, as such, the Pontifical Mission Societies are recognized as the principal instrument for educating the faithful to an awareness of the

Church's universal mission and for encouraging their support, in prayer and sacrifice, for the evangelizing mission of the Church among two-thirds of the human family.

### **What is the Missionary Childhood Association?**

The Missionary Childhood Association (MCA) – formerly the Holy Childhood Association – is one of four Pontifical Mission Societies active in over 110 countries throughout the world. Founded in France in 1843 by Bishop Charles de Forbin-Janson, MCA helps to animate the young faithful to a universal missionary spirit and to gather support from these children for the service of the local churches of Africa, Asia, remote regions of Latin America and the Pacific Islands among the poorest of the world's children.

### **How can I help the Missions of the world through the Pontifical Mission Societies?**

All baptized Catholics have the opportunity to participate in the worldwide mission of the Church by offering their prayers, personal sacrifices or financial contributions to the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, the Missionary Childhood Association or the Society for St. Peter Apostle. The Missionary Union of Priests and Religious is a spiritual apostolate for Priests, Religious men and women, catechists and lay people. Each year, the celebration of World Mission Sunday provides an opportunity, within the context of the Eucharist, for Catholics to express their prayerful and financial support of the Church's worldwide missionary work and the Society for the Propagation of the Faith in particular.

### **What is World Mission Sunday?**

World Mission Sunday is a day set aside for Catholics worldwide to recommit themselves to the Church's missionary activity through prayer and sacrifice. Annually, World Mission Sunday is celebrated on the next-to-last Sunday in October. Offerings from Catholics in the United States, on World Mission Sunday and throughout the year, are combined with offerings from Catholics around the globe and distributed to mission dioceses — about 1,200 at this time.

### **Our parish has a special relationship with another parish in the Developing World. I help to support this relationship through financial contributions and volunteer work. Do I still need to support the work of the Pontifical Mission Societies?**

Forms of direct cooperation between churches, also called "twinning" can be of great benefit to a parish in the Developing World and provide parishioners of the "sister" church in the United States with great spiritual fulfillment. This one-on-one relationship works best to the degree that it broadens the vision of Catholics here to see the universal needs of the mission Church. Care should be taken not to limit one's range of action to one objective so as to safeguard the principle of universal equity in the distribution of funds.

**A representative of the the missions just visited my parish. During the talk given about the missions, s/he asked for help for his diocese. Does the money I offer during this special collection get sent to the Pontifical Mission Societies?**

Very often, priests, Religious men and women, and lay missionaries visit the United States (often in the summer months) to seek prayer and financial support for the work of their dioceses or Religious Communities in the Missions. These parish appeals are coordinated in dioceses by the Pontifical Mission Societies office as part of the Missionary Cooperation Plan. The money collected in your parish in response to such a visit / appeal is given directly to the missionary for use in his / her diocese or by his / her Religious Congregation. This help would be in addition to any help offered by the Pontifical Mission Societies themselves, which is sometimes the case, particularly for a mission diocese.

**How are my donations distributed to the Missions?**

Offerings from Catholics in the United States are combined with offerings to the Propagation of the Faith from Catholics worldwide. Mission dioceses receive regular annual assistance from the funds collected. This grant of help is provided according to a diocese's size. In addition, these mission dioceses submit requests to the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples for assistance for, among other needs, catechetical programs, seminaries, the work of Religious Communities, communication and transportation needs, and the building of chapels and churches. These needs are then matched with the funds gathered in each year. The world's national directors of the Pontifical Mission Societies vote on these requests, matching the funds available with the greatest of needs for help. These funds are then distributed to mission dioceses throughout the world, directly from the country in which that help was raised. All of the General Fund of support is distributed in its entirety each year.

**I would like to serve as a lay missionary. What should I do?**

There are a number of local and national organizations that help "connect" lay Catholics to mission opportunities in the United States and abroad. For more information, contact the Pontifical Mission Societies in Boston using the information below or contact the [Catholic Volunteer Network](#) (CVN). Catholic Volunteer Network promotes opportunities for men and women of all backgrounds and skills to respond to the Gospel through domestic and international volunteer service to people in need. CVN connects volunteers and missionaries with more than 200 faith-based programs offering more than 20,000 full-time volunteer placements throughout the U.S. and in over 115 countries.

## **The Missions: An Overview of What the Pontifical Mission Societies Do....**

Say “mission” today and most think of Africa and Asia, of faraway places where the poor hear the “Good News” of Jesus and experience the Lord’s great love through the work and witness of missionaries. But a century ago, the “Missions” were right here at home, and missionaries from Europe proclaimed the Gospel and served the poor on our shores, all motivated by the command of Jesus to “go, make disciples of all nations.”

The Pontifical Mission Societies are: The Society for the Propagation of the Faith, The Society of St. Peter Apostle, Holy Childhood Association and Missionary Union of Priest and Religious

I would like to present some frequently asked questions about the Pontifical Mission Societies. Both the questions and responses in this column are part of a number of Frequently Asked Questions that are found the Pontifical Mission Society webpage: [www.onefamilyinmission.org/faqs.html](http://www.onefamilyinmission.org/faqs.html).

Where are the Pontifical Mission Societies located?

National offices exist in more than 120 countries around the world including the United States. Central administrative offices are located in Rome, Italy, under the direction of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples. The national office of the Pontifical Mission Societies in the United States is located in New York City. The national director is Father Andrew Small. In addition, every diocese in the United States has a diocesan director who is appointed by the Bishop of that diocese.

What makes the Pontifical Mission Societies unique from other mission organizations? According to the teaching of Vatican Council II, the Pontifical Mission Societies are institutions of the Universal Church and of each local church. Therefore, unlike any other mission organization, the Pontifical Mission Societies are both pontifical and Episcopal in nature. And, as such, the Pontifical Mission Societies are recognized as the principal instrument for educating the faithful to an awareness of the Church’s universal mission and for encouraging their support, in prayer and sacrifice, for the evangelizing mission of the Church among two-thirds of the human family.

Perhaps these were questions you wondered about and are now answered for you! Maybe you never even thought about such questions but hopefully enjoyed learning a bit about the Missions.

# History:

## Pontifical Missions Societies (PMS)



Pauline Jaricot

Our story begins in France in the early 19th century. Pauline Jaricot, inspired by letters about the Missions from her brother, starts gathering together small groups — mostly workers in her family's silk factory. She asked each member of the group to offer daily prayer and a weekly sacrifice of a sous (the equivalent of a penny at that time) for the Church's worldwide missionary work. Pauline insisted that her efforts be directed to all the Church's missions, that it be universal.

From Pauline's vision came the **Society for the Propagation of the Faith**. The very first collection of the Propagation of the Faith in 1822 supported the vast diocese of Louisiana, which then extended from the Florida Keys to Canada, as well as the Missions of Kentucky and China.

The Propagation of the Faith continues to seek prayer and sacrifice for the world's Missions, now some 1,100 dioceses in Asia, Africa, the Pacific Islands and remote regions of Latin America. Help is offered for pastoral and evangelizing programs, for catechists and catechetical work, to build churches and chapels, for the work of Religious Communities in health care and education, and for communication and transportation needs.

More than a decade before Pauline Jaricot envisioned the idea for the Propagation of the Faith; a young French nobleman — Charles de Forbin-Janson — was ordained a priest.



Bishop Charles De

Forbin-Janson

One day in 1843, now Bishop Forbin-Janson had a talk with Pauline Jaricot about his longtime dream. In the course of the conversation, she suggested that he appeal to the children of France to help children around the world — and the **Missionary Childhood Association (MCA)**, originally known as Holy childhood Association, was born.

Today, MCA continues to follow the vision of Bishop Forbin-Janson – “children helping children.” After learning about the great needs of the world’s poorest children, young people are invited to pray and to offer financial help so that children in the Missions may know Christ and experience his love and care.

The family of help for the Missions grew again as the 19th century was drawing to close. Jeanne Bigard, and her mother, Stephanie received a letter from a French bishop serving in Japan. He told of more than 50 young men preparing for the priesthood and about the difficulty he was having providing for them and trying to accommodate the growing number of young men applying for admission to the seminary. Stephanie and Jeanne began collecting funds to support those seminarians. In 1889, they established the **Society of St. Peter Apostle** to support mission vocations, both priestly and Religious.



Jeanne Bigard

In the first year of its foundation, the Society of St. Peter Apostle aided some 2,700 seminarians. Today, some 28,000 major seminarians, mostly in Asia and Africa, receive an

average annual subsidy of \$700 per student; assistance is also provided for men and women Religious novices.

Our story now takes us to Italy and a new century. Father Paolo Manna, a PIME missionary in Myanmar (then Burma) for a decade, begins to focus on just what is needed to be missionary and to encourage others in missionary work. His study leads him to establish, in 1916, the **Missionary Union of Priests and Religious.**

This spiritual apostolate continues to address itself today to those called to bring Catholics to a better understanding of their baptismal responsibility for the Church's missionary work — to priests, Religious seminarians, pastoral leaders, those engaged in catechesis and religious education. In fact, the success of the efforts of the other three mission societies is linked to the vitality of the Missionary Union, because it is through this work that the missionary spirit — a spirit of prayer and generous sacrifice — is developed and nurtured.



Fr. Paolo Manna, PIME

These four societies each received the official title of "Pontifical" work in 1922, and their central administration was transferred to Rome. National offices exist now in more than 120 countries. Today, this "family" of mission societies in the Church's primary means to inform Catholics about her worldwide missionary work and encourage their active participation — through prayer and sacrifice — in those efforts. Almost two centuries after our story began, it continues — a story of all of us together — as "one family in mission" — committed to the worldwide mission of Jesus.