

The Extraordinary Missionary Month 2019 – An overview



In the decades following the ravages of the Napoleonic Wars, the Catholic Church developed a tremendous missionary dynamic and engaged in one of the most successful mission initiatives in church history. Many of the major missionary orders were

founded in the mid-19th century. They sent thousands of missionaries, men and women, to Asia and Africa, proclaiming the message of Jesus often under the most difficult conditions and establishing new churches. However, the context of colonization and the conviction of the superiority of European culture often stained and distorted the proclamation of the gospel.

After nationalist thinking had led Europe into the catastrophe of the First World War, Pope Benedict XV wrote in 1919 the missionary encyclical "Maximum Illud". He encouraged the Church to re-engage in a universal mission free of its historical burden of colonialism and of all expansionist ambitions.

100 years later, Pope Francis announces an "Extraordinary Mission Month". As Christians we live in a time when the world order is shaken and value systems are questioned, when our faith is challenged by a secular culture and in many places Christians face persecution. In this historical context we are invited to reflect together on the meaning and practice of mission today and to renew our missionary commitment.

With the Lenten impulses we want to invite you to enter into a personal and communal reflection on the different dimensions of the mission of the Church:

1. **A personal encounter with Jesus Christ** living in his Church: in the Eucharist, in the Word of God, and in personal and communal prayer.
2. **Testimony:** the witness of missionary saints, martyrs, and confessors of the faith as an expression of the Church throughout the world.
3. **Missionary formation:** biblical, catechetical, spiritual, and theological.
4. **Missionary charity:** The witness of selfless love and of lived solidarity with the poor and the suffering to make God's love for all people visible.

THE MEANING OF THE LOGO

The logo of the Extraordinary Missionary Month October 2019 depicts a missionary cross whose traditional colors recall the five continents.

The CROSS is the instrument and the efficacious sign of the communion between God and humanity for the universality of our mission. The Cross is luminous, full of color, a sign of victory and resurrection.

The world is transparent, because our action of evangelization has no barriers or boundaries; it is the fruit of the Holy Spirit. Christian charity and the world transfigured in the Spirit overcome distances and open the gaze of our mind and heart.

The words **BAPTIZED AND SENT**, which accompany the image, indicate the two characteristics and inalienable elements of every Christian: baptism and proclamation.

The colors of the Cross are those traditionally attributed to the five continents: red for America, green for Africa, white for Europe, yellow for Asia, and blue for Oceania.

Red recalls the blood of the American martyrs, seeds of a new life in the Christian faith. Red recalls the earth and all that is terrestrial

Green is the color of Africa, of life, nature, and vegetation. It symbolizes growth, fertility, youth, and vitality. It is also the color of hope, one of the three theological virtues.

White is a symbol of joy, the beginning of new life in Christ. It is the challenge for an old Europe, that it might rediscover the evangelizing force that it generated thanks to so many Churches and so many saints.

Yellow is a color of light, which feeds on light by invoking the true Light. In Asia Jesus our light was born.

Blue is the color of Oceania, of the water of life that quenches us and restores us along the path to God. It is also the color of our sky, a sign of God's dwelling with us.

Questions for reflection

Let's take a look at the general chapters of our congregations, which have been struggling over the last decades to translate the missionary charisma of their founders into today's reality. What key points of our mission have emerged?