



The Holy See

Fidei Donum

On the Present Condition of the Catholic Missions, Especially in Africa

*To the Venerable Brethren,
the Patriarchs, Primates, Archbishops, Bishops,
and other Local Ordinaries in Peace and Communion with the Apostolic See. Venerable Brethren, Greetings and
Apostolic Benediction.* The gift of faith, which through the goodness of God, is accompanied by an incomparable abundance of blessings in the soul of the Christian believer, clearly requires the unceasing homage of a grateful heart to the divine Author of this gift.² Indeed, it is faith that allows us to draw near to the hidden mysteries of the divine life; it is faith that encourages us to hope for everlasting happiness; it is faith that strengthens and consolidates the unity of the Christian society in this transitory life, according to the Apostle: "One Lord, one faith, one Baptism."^[1] It is chiefly by reason of this divine gift that our grateful hearts of their own accord pour forth this testimony: "What shall I render to the Lord for all that he hath rendered unto me?"^[2]³ In return for so divine a gift as this, after the due submission of his mind, what can a man do that will be more acceptable to God than to carry far and wide among his fellowmen the torch of truth that Christ brought to Us? By their zeal in promoting the sacred missionary efforts of the Church, a zeal that generously feeds the fire of Christian charity, men, ever mindful of the gift of faith, may in some way make a return to Almighty God; by so doing and imparting to others according to their ability the gift of the faith that is theirs, they are visibly manifesting their gratitude to the Heavenly Father.⁴ As We direct our thoughts, on the one hand, to the countless multitudes of Our sons who have a share in the blessings of divine faith, especially in countries that have long since become Christian, and on the other hand as We consider the far more numerous throngs of those who are still waiting for the day of salvation to be announced to them, We are filled with a great desire to exhort you again and again, Venerable Brethren, to support with zealous interest the most holy cause of bringing the Church of God to all the world. May it come to pass that Our admonitions will arouse a keener interest in the missionary apostolate among your priests and through them set the hearts of the faithful on fire!⁵ This sort of consideration, a very serious one indeed, has been advanced more than once by Our Predecessors, and We Ourselves, as you well know, have been most earnest in touching upon it.^[3] It should inspire all Catholics with apostolic zeal, as their awareness of having received the faith demands. Let them direct this zeal toward those regions of Europe in which the Christian religion has been cast off, or to the boundless spaces of South America; in both of these continents there are great difficulties to be overcome, as We know well. Let them give financial assistance to the Catholics of Oceania and to the missions in Asia; such assistance is of the utmost importance, especially in those countries where the battles of the Lord are being fought so fiercely. Let them likewise perform the duties of fraternal charity in behalf of those countless Christians who are very dear to Us and are the glory of the Church,

since they have earned the evangelical beatitude proper to those "who suffer persecution for justice' sake." [4] Let them grieve for the lamentable state of innumerable souls, especially of those young people who because of the atheistic propaganda of our times are growing up in the wretched condition of complete ignorance of religion and, in some cases, of active hatred of God.⁶ We confess that these numerous duties and undertakings must necessarily be carried out as soon as possible and that they require a fresh growth of apostolic vigor in the Church, so that there may rush forth into the open battlefield of the Lord "countless phalanxes of apostolic men, not unlike those who sprang up in the primitive Church." [5]⁷ Although We do not cease to follow all these developments with prayerful anxiety and to commend them earnestly to your active interest, We deem it fitting at the present moment to direct your serious attention to Africa - the Africa that is at long last reaching out toward the higher civilization of our times and aspiring to civic maturity; the Africa that is involved in such grave upheavals as perhaps have never before been recorded in her ancient annals.⁸

Considering the healthy progress made by the Church in Africa during recent decades, Christians have every right to rejoice and feel justly proud. Upon Our elevation to the Chair of Peter, We asserted that "We should spare no efforts in order that the Cross of Christ in which is our salvation and life might cast its shadow over even the most distant quarters of the universe." [6] Therefore We have striven to promote the cause of the Gospel in that continent with all Our might. This is evidenced by the great increase of ecclesiastical provinces there, by the widespread increase in the number of Catholics, who daily become more numerous, and especially by the Hierarchy which it has been Our consolation to establish in not a few districts, as well as by the considerable number of African priests who have been elevated to the Episcopate.⁹ This last is, of course, in accordance with that final, as it were, goal of missionary efforts, namely, that "the Church should be solidly established among other peoples, and a Hierarchy given to them chosen from among their own sons." [7] In accordance with this policy the new Churches of Africa are taking their legitimate place in the great Catholic family, while the rest of the faithful who have preceded them in embracing the faith unite with them in brotherly love and welcome them enthusiastically.¹⁰ This plentiful harvest of souls has been gathered by hosts of missionaries--priests, religious (both men and women), catechists, and lay assistants--with an infinite toil and sacrifice whose value, unknown to men, is known only to God Himself. We are happy to offer Our congratulations to these good people, one and all, and to open Our grateful heart to them on this occasion; for the Church has abundant reason for taking a holy pride in the achievements of her missionaries, who are doing their duty in Africa and wherever else they have an opportunity.¹¹

However, one must not allow the prodigious success of missionary effort, that We allude to here, to cause him to forget that "what still remains to be done demands an immense amount of work and countless workers." [8] And although some might rashly conclude that once a Hierarchy has been established there is no further need for the work of the missionaries, yet We Ourselves are greatly troubled by Our "solicitude for all the Churches" of that vast continent.¹² Can We be aught but deeply anxious as We behold from the heights of this Apostolic See the gravity of the questions that are being debated there with regard to the manner of spreading the Christian way of life and its deeper cultivation, as well as the great scarcity of apostolic laborers to undertake the many important tasks that are waiting to be done? These are the cares and anxieties that We have been wishing to share with you, Venerable Brethren. If your response is prompt and eager, it may happily come to pass that the hearts of the many hardworking apostles already in the field will be encouraged to hope anew for better things.¹³ You cannot fail to be aware of the extraordinarily difficult circumstances under which the Church in Africa is striving nowadays to forward her work among the heathen multitudes. In fact the greater part of Africa is undergoing such speedy changes in social, economic, and political life that the entire future of that continent appears to depend upon their outcome.¹⁴ No one must overlook the fact that current events, involving as they do the entire community of nations, have grave repercussions in individual countries and do not always afford an opportunity, even to the wisest rulers, to advance their people to that level of civilization demanded by the genuine

prosperity of nations.¹⁵ The Church, however, has seen in the course of her history the rise and growth of many nations, and therefore, cannot help directing her careful attention to those nations that she perceives to be now on the point of obtaining the rights of civil liberty. We Ourselves have on frequent occasions exhorted the nations concerned to take the proper course, impelled by their sincere desire for peace and a mutual recognition of their respective interests. "At any rate," We told one group, "let not those people be denied a fair and progressive political freedom or be hindered in its pursuit." We admonished another "to give credit to Europe for their advancement: to that Europe without whose influence, extended to all fields, they might be drawn by a blind nationalism to plunge into chaos or slavery."^[9]¹⁶ As We now repeat these same admonitions, it is Our burning desire that in Africa men may attain to that concord of minds that begets every form of strength: a concord that will exclude prejudice and offense on either side, that will rise above the dangerous narrowness of excessive love of country, that will make it possible to communicate the outstanding benefits of Christian civilization to these peoples, whose natural resources are abundant and whose future prospects are bright. These benefits have already been accompanied by great advantages to the nations of the other continents.¹⁷ Yet We are aware that seeds of trouble are being sown in various parts of Africa by the proponents of atheistic materialism, who are stirring up the emotions of the natives by encouraging mutual envy among them and by distorting their unhappy material condition in an attempt to deceive them with an empty show of advantages to be won, or to incite them to seditious acts.¹⁸ Such is Our anxiety that the peoples of Africa should attain to an ever increasing and genuine prosperity, both civic and Christian, that We are desirous of applying to them the grave admonitions that We have on other occasions solemnly directed to the Catholics of the whole world; and We take great pleasure in extending Our paternal congratulations to those Bishops who have, more than once, firmly protected from the dangers of false leaders the sheep entrusted to them.¹⁹ Now that those who hate God are zealously bringing their insidious attacks to bear upon this great continent, other serious difficulties have arisen to hinder the spread of the Gospel in certain districts of Africa. Of course, you know the religious tenets of those people who, although they are quick to profess that they worship God, nevertheless are easily attracting and enticing the minds of many into another path which is not that of Jesus Christ, the Savior of all nations. Our heart, which is that of the common Father of all, is open to every man of good will; but We, who are the representative on earth of Him, Who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, cannot contemplate such a situation without great sorrow.²⁰ This situation has come about from a number of causes, which are in general the outcome of rather recent historical events, and it has further been influenced to some extent by the conduct of certain nations that glory in the fact that the light of Christianity illuminates their annals. There is every reason, therefore, why We should be subject to no small anxiety with regard to the fortunes of Catholicism in Africa. There is every reason too why all the Church's children should clearly realize their serious obligation to give more effective assistance to the missionaries. This they must do at the opportune moment in order that the message of saving truth may be brought to what is called "darkest" Africa, where some 85,000,000 people still sit in the darkness of idolatry.²¹ The gravity of these statements is further increased by the too precipitate course of events - this can be observed everywhere - which has by no means escaped the notice of the Catholic bishops and the leading Catholics. While the peoples of this continent are striving to adopt new ways and new methods (and some of them appear to be only too eager to lend an ear to the fallacies of that species of civilization known as technological), it is the solemn duty of the Church to impart to these same peoples, so far as possible, the outstanding blessings of her life and her teaching, from which a new social order should be derived, based on Christian principles.²² Any delay or hesitation is full of danger. For the people of Africa have made as much progress toward civilization during the past few decades as required many centuries among the nations of Western Europe. Thus they are more easily unsettled and confused by the introduction of theoretical and applied scientific methods, with the result that they tend to be unduly inclined to a materialistic outlook on life. Hence a condition of affairs

is sometimes brought about that is difficult to correct and in the course of time may prove to be a great obstacle to the growth of faith, whether in individuals or in society at large. For this reason it is imperative that help should be given now to the shepherds of the Lord's flock in order that their apostolic labors may correspond to the ever-growing needs of the times.²³ At the same time, the various forms of aid supplied at present to the sacred missions are everywhere & short of the amount required for a satisfactory prosecution of missionary effort. This insufficiency of means, which, unfortunately, is not confined to Africa, seems to affect this continent more seriously than other missionary fields on account of Africa's peculiar situation at the present moment. For this reason, We deem it opportune, Venerable Brethren, to go into some detail with regard to the problems that are met in Africa.²⁴ For example, mission stations recently founded (i.e., within the last ten or twenty years) will have to wait a long time before they can enjoy the effective assistance of a native clergy. To this problem is added the small number of missionary workers, who are scattered widely throughout an immense population where not infrequently non-Catholic ministers are also active; they therefore cannot possibly perform all the tasks they are called upon to undertake. In one district some forty priests are working very hard among a million natives of whom only 25,000 profess the Catholic faith. In another locality fifty priests are stationed in the midst of a population of 2,000,000 persons, where the care of 60,000 Catholics in the area alone requires almost full-time service.²⁵ No true Catholic can fail to be concerned by these statistics. If twenty apostolic men were sent to the assistance of the local clergy in these regions, the standard of the Cross could be moved forward today, where tomorrow perhaps, after the activities of others who are not the followers of Christ have already cultivated the field, there will no longer be any opening for the true faith.²⁶ Moreover, it is not enough merely to preach the Gospel as if this were the whole of the missionary's task. The present situation in Africa, both social and political, requires that a carefully trained Catholic elite be formed at once from the multitudes already converted. How urgent it is then to increase the number of missionaries able to give a more adequate training to these native leaders!²⁷ The drawbacks experienced by the few apostolic workers in the field are increased by their want of material means, which often approaches real poverty. Who will furnish these recently established missions with the generous financial backing they so urgently need? For they are situated, for the most part, in poverty-stricken districts which are, nevertheless, promising fields for the spread of the Gospel. The apostolic laborer is deeply grieved by his lack of so many things while the performance of so many tasks rests upon him. He does not need our admiration aiding the missions, if they are fully informed of the situation.³⁵ This state of the African apostolate, which We have summarily set before you, Venerable Brethren, makes it manifest that in Africa it is not a question of merely local problems that can eventually be solved without any reference to those that touch upon the entire Christian community.³⁶ Although formerly "the life of the Church in its visible aspects showed its vigor chiefly in the older parts of Europe from which it began to spread out to the shores that may be called the periphery of the world, now however there is a kind of mutual exchange of life and strength among all the members of the Mystical Body of Christ."^[10]³⁷ What befalls the Church in Africa is not confined to that continent, but also affects those who dwell far beyond its borders. It follows then that, in accordance with the admonitions of the Apostolic See, fraternal assistance must be extended by all parts of the Church to meet the needs of Catholics anywhere.³⁸ It is, therefore, not by chance that We are addressing Ourselves to you, Venerable Brethren, in this solemn hour of decision with regard to the spread of the Church. "Just as in our mortal frame, all the members suffer in union with each member, and the healthy members come to the aid of the ailing ones, so in the Church the individual members do not live for themselves alone but also assist the others and all render mutual aid to all, not only in comforting one another but also in contributing to the greater edification of the entire Body."^[11] To go further, must not the bishops "be considered the chief members of the universal Church, inasmuch as they are united by a peculiar bond to the Divine Head of the whole Body and are therefore properly called the principal parts of the Lord's body"^[12]³⁹. Of them, more than of the rest, it can be said that Christ who is the

Head of the Mystical Body "requires them to be His members . . . , first of all, because in so far as the Person of Christ is represented by the Sovereign Pontiff, the latter must call upon not a few others to share his anxieties lest he be overwhelmed by the burdens of his pastoral office." [13]40. And so, Venerable Brethren, since you are most intimately associated with Christ and His Vicar upon earth, inspired by a burning charity be zealous to share that solicitude for all the churches, [14] which lies heavy upon Our shoulders. [15] Urged by the charity of Christ, may you realize that you are closely bound to Us in the pressing duty of spreading the Gospel and building up the Church throughout the whole world!41. May you not cease or falter in your efforts to cultivate widely among clergy and faithful alike the spirit of prayer and zeal in giving mutual assistance according to the measure of the charity of Christ! Says St. Augustine, "Extend your charity to all the world, if you would love Christ, because Christ's members are found all over the world." [16]42. It is an undoubted fact that it was to Peter alone and to his successors, the Roman Pontiffs, that Jesus Christ entrusted the entirety of his flock: "Feed my lambs; feed my sheep." [17] But even though each bishop is the pastor of that portion only of the Lord's flock entrusted to him, nevertheless as lawful successor of the Apostles by God's institution and commandment he is also responsible, together with all the other bishops, for the Apostolic task of the Church, according to the words of Christ to the Apostles: "As the Father has sent me, I also send you." [18]43. This mission, or "sending forth," embraces "all nations . . . even unto the consummation of the world" [19] and certainly did not cease with the death of the Apostles. Nay, it still continues in the bishops who are in communion with the Vicar of Jesus Christ. For in them, as being specifically named "those who are sent," namely, Apostles of the Lord, the fullness of the apostolic dignity resides, which as St. Thomas Aquinas testifies "is the chief dignity in the Church." [20] That apostolic fire which Jesus Christ brought upon the earth must issue from their hearts and inflame the hearts of all Our faithful children and arouse in them fresh zeal for the missionary tasks of the Church everywhere.44. Again, this concern for the needs of the whole Church is a true mark of the Catholic character of the living Church. "Zeal for missionary activity and the Catholic spirit are one and the same. A principal note of the Church is catholicity; consequently, a man is no true member of the Church unless he is likewise a true member of the entire body of Christian believers and is filled with an ardent desire to see her take root and flourish in every land." [21]45. Nothing is so inconsistent with the Church of Jesus Christ as division; nothing is so opposed to her very life as for her members to take refuge in selfish solitude, or to be too much devoted to themselves and to take an interest only in the private concerns of their own little group. Such an attitude surely causes any particular Christian community to become completely self-centered.46. Now, our holy Mother the Church is indeed the mother "of all nations, of all peoples, as well as of individual persons; nowhere is she a stranger; she lives or at least, by her very nature, ought to live among every people." [22] Further, and this must be stressed, none of those things that pertain to the Church, our Mother, is foreign to any individual Christian, nor ought it to be so. Just as the faith of individuals is the faith of the entire Church, so the consolations and the anxieties of the Church will be their consolations and anxieties as well; likewise the prospects and plans of the Church, which embrace the whole world, will be the prospects and plans of their daily Christian lives.47. Then will it spontaneously come to pass that the exhortations of the Roman Pontiffs which are commensurate with the mighty apostolic tasks to be accomplished everywhere, will find an echo in their fully and truly Catholic hearts, as exhortations to be gladly received above all others, and to be seriously and insistently weighed and considered.48. From the beginning holy Church by her very nature has been compelled to spread the Word of God everywhere, and in fulfilling this obligation to which she knows not how to be unfaithful she has never ceased to ask for a threefold assistance from her children: namely, prayers, material aid, and, in some cases, the gift of themselves. At the present day, too, her missionary activities, especially in Africa, demand this threefold assistance from the Catholic world.49. First of all, therefore, Venerable Brethren, We trust that more continuous and fervent prayers will be raised to God for this cause.50. You must see to it that earnest and unceasing prayers are offered by your priests and faithful in

furthering this holy purpose. Instruction of the faithful concerning the life of the Church will supply, as it were, food for this prayerful devotion, as We have already indicated. Devout souls should be exhorted to greater efforts in prayer at definite times during the liturgical year that seem to be more suitable for fostering and promoting interest in missionary work.⁵¹ We think the following seasons would be particularly opportune: Advent, when we recall the expectation of a Savior by the human race as well as the providential preparations for the coming of the Savior; the feast of Epiphany which reveals the Savior born among men; and Pentecost when we celebrate the foundation of the Church under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost.⁵² Of course, the most excellent prayer of all is the one offered daily at the altar by Christ Jesus, the High Priest, to God the Father when the holy sacrifice of Redemption is renewed. Accordingly, let many Masses be offered for the sacred missions, especially in this our time on which the future growth of the Church in many areas is perhaps dependent. This is in accordance with the prayers of our Lord Who loves His Church and wishes her to flourish and enlarge her borders throughout the whole world.⁵³ Although the private prayers of Christians are to be considered entirely appropriate, it is nevertheless advantageous to recall to their minds the chief and essential purpose of the celebration of the Sacrifice of the Altar, as it is stated in the Canon of the Latin Mass: "in the first place . . . for Thy holy Catholic Church, that it may please Thee to grant her peace, to protect, unite, and govern her throughout the world." These profound intentions of the Church will be more readily grasped by the faithful, if they will meditate on the doctrine laid down by Us in the Encyclical *Mediator Dei*, in which We taught that every Eucharistic sacrifice must be considered an action performed in the Church's name, because "the celebrant at the Altar takes the part of Christ as our Head offering in the name of all His members."^[23]⁵⁴ This being the case, the whole Church offers her holy oblation through Christ to the Eternal Father "for the salvation of the whole world." Surely then, the prayers of the faithful offered during this same sacrifice, in union with the Sovereign Pontiff, the bishops, and the entire Church, will be very fervently offered to Almighty God to implore a fresh outpouring of the graces of the Holy Spirit, because of which "the whole world rejoices with exceeding great joy."⁵⁵ More and more, then, Venerable Brethren, you must offer your fervent prayers to God. Cease not to direct your thoughtful considerations to the many peoples who are deeply involved in literally countless spiritual dangers: those who wander far from the way of truth as well as those who stand in such great need of the means of perseverance.⁵⁶ In union with Christ take your stand as suppliants before the Heavenly Father and allow that prayer to rise to Him from your lips again and again, which has been especially appropriate to apostolic men in every age: "hallowed by Thy name; Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven"! Only then shall we be influenced solely by the honor of God and by zeal to give Him greater glory, when we earnestly desire the restoration of His Kingdom - the Kingdom of justice, of love, and of peace--throughout all the world. Sincere and heartfelt eagerness to promote the missionary labors of the Church, when it is united with a burning charity for one's neighbor, is surely zeal for God's glory. For by it help is given to apostolic workers who are in a special way God's heralds and precursors.⁵⁷ We might ask, further, whether our prayers come from a sincere heart if we pray for the success of the missions without accompanying our prayers with charitable offerings in accordance with our means. We are well acquainted - in fact, better than anyone else - with the profuse liberality of Our sons, as many wonderful examples constantly testify. To these generous souls is due, beyond a doubt, the marvelous growth of our missions since the beginning of this century. In consequence We desire to express Our profound gratitude to those beloved sons and daughters of Ours who contribute their zealous efforts and charitable support to many missionary enterprises.⁵⁸ We also wish to bestow particular praise on all members of the pontifical mission society who have undertaken the noble, if sometimes thankless, task of collecting funds in the Church's name, becoming, as it were, beggars for the newly founded communities of faithful in the mission fields, which afford the Church so much glory and hope. We congratulate these Our beloved sons from Our heart, just as We are happy to express Our best thanks to all those, likewise, who support the Society for the Propagation of the Faith

with such alacrity. To the latter has been entrusted a gigantic task: namely, the promotion of missionary work in vast continents under the direction of Our dear son, the Cardinal Prefect.⁵⁹ However We must make it clear, conscious as We are of Our apostolic duty, that your support, though gladly received, is still far from being adequate to the countless needs of the missions. We are daily appealed to and importuned for assistance by missionaries who are hard pressed to promote the welfare of the Church, to remove hindrances thereto, to build the churches so urgently needed, or to undertake various activities of the apostolate. Naturally We are sick at heart when We have to answer these just appeals with only partial and insufficient amounts.⁶⁰ The Pontifical Society of St. Peter the Apostle may serve as an example. Very ample means, indeed, are distributed by this Institute in mission lands. However, the number of candidates for the priesthood is increasing yearly with God's help, and so more funds are constantly required. Shall the young men who seem to be called by the providence of God to the priesthood at the present time, be admitted in smaller numbers because of insufficient funds? Is it right, as We hear has happened in a number of places, that the seminaries should be forced to exclude so many youths who aspire ardently to the priesthood and who give good hopes of persevering? Perish the thought! It cannot be that Catholics who have a high ideal of their grave obligations, as indeed they ought, should refuse to accept personal responsibility in meeting these needs of the missions.⁶¹ We are aware of the difficulties of our times, and of the dire straits to which the ancient dioceses of Europe and America are reduced. But if we reason correctly, we can easily see that the poverty of some dioceses will appear to be abundant by comparison with the extreme need that prevails in others. Such a comparison, however, is without any point, since it is of less importance to balance statistics than to urge all the faithful, as We have done on another auspicious occasion, "to range themselves voluntarily beneath the Christian standards of abstinence and self-denial, beyond the requirements of the moral law, in accordance with each one's ability, as the grace of God inspires them and as their station in life permits." We also added, "let people devote to charity what they withdraw from vanities, and mercifully meet the needs of the Church and of her poor."^[24]⁶² How many good works some missionary, now hindered in his apostolic labors by poverty, might not accomplish with the money not infrequently squandered on fleeting enjoyment by some thoughtless Christian! It behooves every child of the Church, every family, every group of Christians to examine themselves diligently on this point. Let them reflect on these words: "You know the graciousness of our Lord Jesus Christ - how, being rich, he became poor for your sakes, that by his poverty you might become rich."^[25] Then let them set aside some of their superfluities, nay, at times, something of what they need. Remember that in your charity are found the means whereby the boundaries of religion may be broadened; and the face of the earth will be renewed if charity prevails.⁶³ The Church in Africa, as well as in other parts of the mission field, needs missionaries. Hence We appeal once again to you, Venerable Brethren, beseeching you that with every resource at your command you show your zeal in supporting all those who have been divinely called to undertake the burdens of the missionary apostolate, whether they be priests or religious men and women.⁶⁴ It is especially your task, as We have already pointed out, to encourage the faithful and arouse in them such zeal in this cause that they will share the solitudes of the entire Church and will readily lend an ear to the Lord's word, commanding, as of old, so in every age: "Go forth from thy land and thy kindred, and from the house of thy father, and come into a land which I shall show thee."^[26]⁶⁵ Now if the people are trained in this truly Catholic attitude in the domestic circle, in the schools, in the parishes, in Catholic Action groups, and in other pious societies, there can be no doubt that they will give the Church those ministers she needs in preaching the divine message to all nations. Nor should this point be overlooked: if an enthusiastic interest in the missions is aroused in your particular dioceses, it will be a pledge of the renewal of religion and devotion in the minds and hearts of your people. It is impossible for a Christian community to perish that gives its sons and daughters to the Church. Consequently, if the supernatural life is the fruit of charity and is increased by the spirit of self dedication, one may rightly assert that the

Catholic life of any nation is measured by its generosity in supporting and maintaining the missionary activity of the Church.⁶⁶ It is not enough, however, to make your people more zealous in supporting this work; much more is required. Not a few dioceses are so well supplied with clergy, thanks be to God, that no loss would be felt if some of their priests should enter the mission field. To such dioceses We would apply, with fatherly solicitude, the Gospel saying: what you have that is over and above your needs, give that to the poor.^[27] Our heart goes out to Our brother bishops who are filled with distress and fear as they see the number of candidates for the priesthood and the religious life growing fewer, and are thus unable to provide properly for the spiritual needs of their own flocks. We share their anxiety and say to them as St. Paul did to the Corinthians: "Not that the relief of others should become your burden, but that there should be equality."^[28]⁶⁷. Nonetheless, dioceses that are suffering from such a shortage of clergy should not therefore close their ears to Our supplications for help in the foreign missions. The widow's mite is proposed by our Lord for our imitation. If a poor diocese helps another poor diocese, it cannot possibly grow poorer in so doing; God does not allow Himself to be outdone in generosity.⁶⁸ The efforts of individuals are not sufficient to solve the many problems connected with seeking out and selecting missionary vocations. Study these problems in your meetings, Venerable Brethren, and in attempting to solve them make use of the Institutes, if there be any, in your respective countries that are devoted to the missionary apostolate. In this way new methods will be devised in addition to those already in use, by which the hearts of young people may be drawn more readily to missionary vocations; and thus your own obligations which bind you in conscience to work for the general welfare of the Church will be fulfilled in some degree.⁶⁹ In your dioceses zealously foster the Missionary Union of the Clergy, commended both by Our predecessors and by Ourselves. We have elevated it to the rank of a pontifical society so that no one may question the high opinion We have of it nor the great results We expect to be attained through its growth in membership. The efforts put forth by the pastors of the Church and by those who have been entrusted with mission work must be closely associated, since success depends largely upon unanimity of purpose.⁷⁰ Here We should like to mention those who are in charge of the Propagation of the Faith in every country, whose work you will assist if you support the diocesan branches of this society. We also call to mind the superiors of the highly deserving missionary congregations to whom this Holy See constantly appeals for help in the more pressing needs of the mission countries. They will be unable to increase the number of their vocations unless the local Ordinaries give them friendly support. Take pains to reconcile your individual interests after careful consideration and a genuinely mutual agreement. If these interests seem for the moment to be divergent, why not weigh them again in the light of a strong and lively faith, keeping the supernatural motives of the unity and catholicity of the Church ever before your eyes.⁷¹ With the same affectionate interest that joins its efforts with those of others in fraternal harmony and excludes all selfish considerations, be especially careful to bestow spiritual care upon the youths from Africa and Asia, who perchance are resident in your dioceses for the purpose of continuing their studies.⁷² These young men, uprooted by the social upheavals in their own countries, for many reasons often do not enjoy sufficient Catholic social contacts among the people who are giving them hospitality. Owing to this their Christian lives may be endangered, as the true values and excellences of the new culture they are seeking may escape them and they may be, in consequence, seduced by the doctrines of materialism and may succumb to the blandishments of atheistic coteries. You cannot ignore the impact of this on their present and future careers. It would be a good idea to appoint some devout and well-equipped members of the clergy to take charge of this apostolate, thus relieving the anxieties of their own bishops in the mission fields.⁷³ Another form of assistance, which is more burdensome, has been undertaken by some bishops who, despite the difficulties attendant upon so doing, have permitted this or that priest of the diocese to go and spend some time in working for the bishops of Africa.⁷⁴ This procedure has the exceptional result of allowing the wise and well-planned establishment of specialized forms of the priestly ministry, such as taking charge of teaching the secular and sacred

sciences for which the local clergy have not been trained. We are happy to encourage these timely and fruitful undertakings. If this course of action is taken with due preparation, very important advantages will accrue to the Catholic Church in present-day Africa, which has its full measure of both difficulties and hopes.⁷⁵ There is yet another and quite different form of assistance given nowadays to missionary dioceses, which affords Us intense pleasure and which is deserving of notice before We bring this Encyclical Letter to an end. This is the active work undertaken by laymen under the direction of the Church in behalf of the new Christian communities. It consists for the most part in cooperating with the various national and international Catholic Institutes. The application of this assistance surely requires the zeal, the moderation, and the prudence that are proper in working for the good of others; but it is of great benefit to dioceses harassed by insistent demands from fresh apostolic activities.⁷⁶ These laymen, thus enlisted under the banner of Christ and completely obedient to the bishop who properly reserves to himself the final authority in the apostolate, and being in complete accord with the Catholics of Africa who look favorably upon these fraternal recruits, usefully bring to bear upon the recently established dioceses the full weight of their experience in Catholic Action and other social programs and in any other particular activities required in the apostolate. Further - and this is extremely beneficial - they are able to effect a speedier and easier union of their own national Institutes with countless other agencies that are international in scope. We are happy to congratulate them on the excellent work they are doing for the good of the Church.⁷⁷ While We earnestly lift Our voice in urgent exhortation in behalf of the Missions of Africa, Our thoughts, as you well know, Venerable Brethren, are not unmindful of those other sons of Ours who are devoting themselves to advancing the Church's cause in the other continents. We love them all, especially those who are undergoing extraordinary sufferings in the Far East. Although the unusual conditions in Africa have been the occasion of this Encyclical, We do not wish to bring it to a close without taking a final look at all the missionary activities of the Catholic Church.⁷⁸ To you, Venerable Brethren, who have the pastoral care of those regions where the Gospel seed has only lately been sown and who are founding or consolidating new ecclesiastical jurisdictions, We desire that this letter should be not only a pledge of Our fatherly solicitude, but an evidence as well that the entire Church of Jesus Christ is awake to the extent and the difficulty of your task and is with you to the uttermost in order to aid your work with prayers, with material help, and with the service of her noblest sons. What difference does it make that you are separated from the center of Catholicism by enormous distances? Are not those sons of the Church whose courage is outstanding and whose endurance is taxed to the utmost dearer to her heart?⁷⁹ We herewith offer a public testimonial of Our gratitude and confidence to you, heralds of the Gospel, priests chosen from every country, religious men and women, seminarians, catechists, laymen battling beneath the banner of the Gospel, and finally to all of you who are sowing the religion of Jesus Christ, scattered as you are throughout the world and utterly unknown.⁸⁰ Persevere resolutely in the work you have begun, glorying in the fact that you serve the Church, that you obey her voice, that you are prompted more and more by her inspiration and her spirit, and that you are united in the bonds of brotherly love.⁸¹ What a consolation it is for you, beloved sons, and what a pledge of assured victory to consider that this hidden and peaceful warfare that you are waging for Holy Church is not yours alone or that of your age or your people, but the ever-enduring conflict of the whole Church which it behooves all her children to carry on manfully, since it is their bounden duty to return thanks to God and to their brethren for the gift of faith received in their baptism.⁸² "If I preach the Gospel, I have therein no ground for boasting, since I am under constraint. For woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel!"^[29] Why should We not apply these earnest admonitions to Ourselves, that is, to the Vicar of Jesus Christ, who by reason of his apostolic office has been appointed "a preacher and apostle . . . a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth"?^[30] Therefore, as We invoke upon the Catholic missions the twofold patronage of St. Francis Xavier and St. Therese of the Child Jesus, the protection of all holy Martyrs, and the powerful maternal help of the Mother of God, the Virgin Mary, Queen of the Apostles, it is Our pleasure to repeat to the

Church the victorious words of her Divine Founder: "Put out into the deep." [31]83. Meanwhile, confident that the active will of all Catholics will respond to these Our exhortations to such a degree that, with the help of divine grace, these missionary endeavors will be able to carry to the very ends of the earth the light of Christian faith and virtue together with advances in material civilization, We lovingly impart to all of you, Venerable Brethren, to your flocks, and specifically to all the preachers of the Gospel, who are so near to Our heart, the Apostolic Blessing as a testimony of Our good will and a pledge of heavenly gifts.⁸⁴ *Issued at St. Peter's in Rome, on the twenty-first day of April, the Feast of the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, in the year 1957, the nineteenth of Our Pontificate.* **PIUS PP.**

XII

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