

INTRODUCTION

Pope Francis, during the Angelus Prayer on World Mission Sunday, October 22, 2017, publicly announced to the whole Church his intention to celebrate an Extraordinary Missionary Month for October 2019. One key aspect of this event is to celebrate the one hundredth anniversary of Pope Benedict XV's Apostolic Letter *Maximum Illud* which gave new impetus to the missionary work of proclaiming the Gospel. Pope Francis desires to reignite the baptismal awareness of the People of God in relation to the mission of the Church. He provided the theme for this celebration: "Baptized and Sent: The Church of Christ on Mission in the World."

With this vision in mind, the National Office of the Pontifical Mission Societies in the Philippines, under the direction of Monsignor Esteban U. Lo, LRMS, in conjunction with his collaborators, decided to prepare mission-focused reflections for each day of October 2019. These meditations for mission are now presented in this handy booklet, designed to be easily distributed and used on a daily basis. Hopefully, priests, religious, catechists, missionaries, and all the lay faithful will find these reflections to be a source of genuine renewal of their mission dedication!

These brief meditations correspond to the spiritual dimensions indicated by Pope Francis in his call for this Extraordinary Missionary Month. The Pope desires a renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ alive in the Church, a reflection on the witness and lives of missionary saints and martyrs, a dedication to missionary formation and catechetics, and a renewed practice of missionary charity.

Pope Francis himself has spoken eloquently about missionary evangelization in his 2013 apostolic exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium (The Joy of the Gospel)*. For Francis, "missionary outreach is *paradigmatic for all the Church's activity*" (15). Francis quotes the words of Saint John Paul II: "today missionary activity still represents the greatest challenge for the Church" (15). Pope Francis says: "I dream of a 'missionary option' ... capable of transforming everything" (27); "throughout the world, let us be 'permanently in a state of mission'" (25).

Friends, as you peruse these mission reflections during October 2019 (and even beyond), may you discover anew that, in Pope Francis' words, "Mission is at once a passion for Jesus and a passion for his people" (268)!

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