

OUR MISSION



PONTIFICAL
MISSION
SOCIETIES
South Africa, Botswana & Swaziland

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Dear fellow Missionary Disciples,

May the peace, joy, hope and New Life of the Risen Christ embrace you all! I trust that you all had a deep spiritual experience particularly in the celebrations of Holy Week and may the Resurrection reality and its implications increase your faith and commitment in your service of God and others.

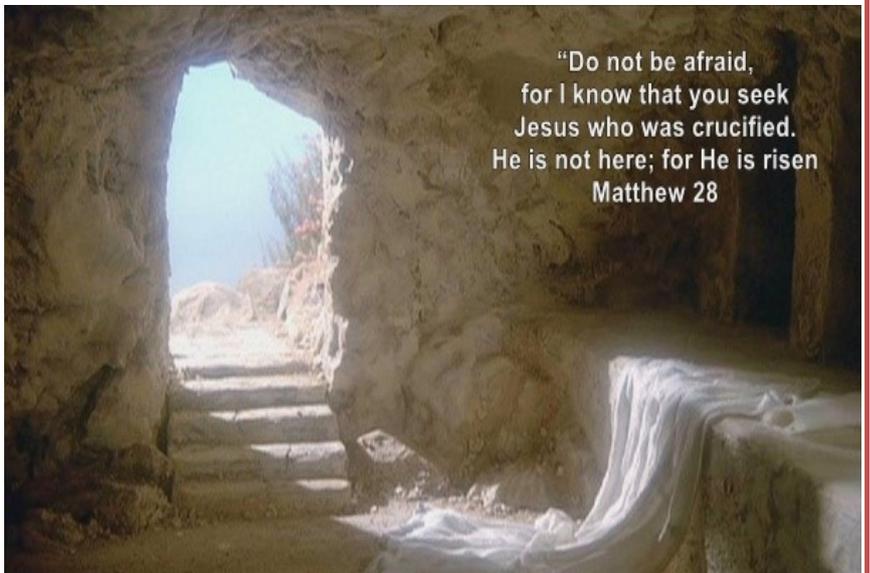
In this edition of **OUR MISSION** we feature some very recent reports relating to the persecution of Christians, (Clergy, Religious and Christian Faithful) on various continents. Sadly, these are just a few of the many tragic incidents that are occurring throughout the world. We need to pray for each other in order that the Lord may grant us the courage to continue to proclaim through our witness of life the Good News of the Gospel and its values without fear. Jesus, our Saviour, goes before us as one who boldly proclaimed the values of the Kingdom. The religious and political authorities of His time saw His message as a threat to them and their positions and so they connived to have him crucified however, through His Resurrection He is victorious over evil and strengthens us on our pilgrimage with the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

With the ending of our Financial Year on 28 February 2017, the necessary preparation and auditing of our Financial Reports took place. These audited reports have now been submitted to the relevant persons in the Vatican. On page 3 we have published the totals of all the donations received per diocese of the SACBC for the past 5 years. A percentage change per year is also given comparing the amount collected with that of the previous year. The total of 2017 Mission collections was 3.75% less than that of 2016. On behalf of all the beneficiaries I would sincerely like to thank everyone who contributed to the Universal Mission Solidarity Fund. Totals of individual monthly and once off donations were as follows 2015 – **R67,242**, 2016 – **R143,368** and 2017 – **R118,617**. Abundant blessings to all of you for your generosity!

We were pleased to learn that approval has been granted by Pope Francis to canonize the martyr, Blessed Archbishop Oscar Romero, a man who lived and died at the service of God and the people of El Salvador, a true Missionary Disciple. Incidentally, Blessed Oscar was a former National Director of the PMS.

South Africa is a wonderful country to live in however, for the vast majority the dream of a new and free South Africa has remained just that. The heart-breaking reality we face as a country can be seen in the unacceptably high incidents of: abject poverty, unemployment,

domestic-violence, racism, xenophobia, violence (robberies, murder, rape, abuse and general insecurity), lack of maintenance and delivery of basic services and poor quality medical care along with massive corruption and exploitation by the State, State Owned Enterprises and various Private Sector enterprises.



“Do not be afraid,
for I know that you seek
Jesus who was crucified.
He is not here; for He is risen
Matthew 28

Sadly, too often, we who call ourselves Christians and Catholics express in word and/or deed serious anti-Gospel values – revenge, intolerance, calumny, hatred, discrimination, greed, division, selfishness, violence, corruption, hypocrisy... As Christians we are called to be witnesses of the values of the Kingdom of God as proclaimed and lived by Jesus himself – forgiveness, mercy, love, truth, service, healing, justice, respect, servant-leadership, honesty, unity, reconciliation and charity.

Unfortunately, in general the political rhetoric in South Africa is polarising, self-serving and vote seeking. We desperately need servant-leaders who will deliver on their promises and work toward reconciliation, unity, prosperity, justice and security for all the people in this amazing country. Let us all pray for our beloved South Africa, its people and its religious, civil and business leaders.

Remember that Pope Francis has declared a new Memorial in the Liturgical Calendar of the Church – *Mary Mother of the Church* which is celebrated on the Monday after Pentecost.

Easter joy and blessings!

Kind regards,

Gordon Rees

Fr. Gordon Rees mccj - National Director

Missio SACBC / PMS -South Africa, Botswana & Swaziland

CHRISTIAN PERSECUTION

Ransom demand for release of Catholic priest in DRC

A statement released on Tuesday by the National Episcopal Conference of Congo (CENCO) said that the kidnapers of Fr Celestin Ngango had contacted St. Paul of Karambi parish demanding the equivalent of 500,000 US dollars in exchange for his freedom.

Fr Ngango was forcefully made to get out of his car and led into the jungle by armed men on Sunday shortly after he had celebrated Easter Mass in his parish in the Diocese of Goma in North Kivu province. Church officials have not yet revealed whether or not a ransom will be paid.

North and South Kivu provinces, where tension has been high for the past 23 years, has lately seen an eruption of violence among militia groups which often extort money from civilians or fight each other for control of mineral resources.

At the end of March ten people were killed in an attack in the North Kivu area perpetrated by an alliance of militias leading to a scaled-up army presence.

Another priest, Fr Robert Masinda, was abducted in North Kivu in January this year together with five other men, all of whom were released two days later. Three priests of the Assumptionist Order, Jean-Pierre Ndulani, Edmond Kisughi and Anselme Wasukundi, were seized there in October 2012, and fellow priests Jean-Pierre Akilimali and Charles Kipasa were abducted in July last year. CENCO has said there has been no news of any of them since then.

Article from Vatican News

Priest & Christians killed in Central African Republic

"We strongly condemn these acts. The men of God have the task of announcing the path of peace and reconciliation", said Cardinal Nzapalainga, in condemning, together with Imam Layama, the killing of Fr. Joseph Désiré Angbabata, parish priest of Séko, who died due to the injuries received in the parish assault.

The population is suffering the consequences of the clashes which broke out on March 20 in several villages in the area, between the UPC (Unité pour la paix en Centrafrique), and the anti balaka militiamen. Several dozen people were killed and their bodies were buried in mass graves. A spokesman for the UPC denied that his group had perpetrated the assaults, stating that they were committed by "bandits".

But local Church sources, who for security reasons have asked for anonymity, reiterate that it was members of the UPC who committed the violence: "The testimonies that came to our attention and the survivors who arrived at the hospital of Bambari firmly affirm that members of the UPC started to commit violence from the village of Goubali to the parish of Séko. They coldly killed Fr. Joseph Désiré Angbabata, parish priest of the church, and a dozen Christians". In reality, as repeatedly emphasized by Cardinal Nzapalainga, by Imam Kobine Layama and by other members of the Central African Platform for Religious Confessions for Peace, the conflict in Central Africa is political, not religious.

Article from Fides

Four Christians killed in IS attack in Pakistan

Four members of a Christian family were killed by gunfire in the Pakistani city of Quetta on Monday in an attack for which the Islamic State has claimed responsibility.

The April 2 attack by men on two motorcycle came as the family was travelling in a rickshaw in a Christian neighbourhood. The family, from Punjab province, were in the capital of Balochistan province to visit relatives for Easter.

According to Dawn, a Karachi daily, the deceased are Imran Masih, Tariq Masih, Pervez Masih, and Firdus Bibi. Sehar Pervez, a girl of about 12 and a daughter of one of the deceased, was injured in the attack.

"It appears to have been a targeted attack," provincial police official Moazzam Jah Ansari told Reuters. "It was an act of terrorism."

The Islamic State claimed responsibility for the attack April 3 through its Amaq News Agency.

In a separate incident in Quetta the same day, five people were killed after a protest by Hazaras, a Shia Muslim minority ethnic group.

Pakistan's state religion is Islam, and around 97% of the population is Muslim. Christians have been targets of terrorist attacks and persecutions for blasphemy in recent years. A December 2017 attack on a Methodist church in Quetta killed eight.

Article from CNA/EWTN News

Priest murdered during Holy Week in El Salvador

Fr. Walter Osmir Vásquez was shot and killed the afternoon of March 29, Holy Thursday, on a dirt road outside of the town of Lolotique, El Salvador, as he was on his way to celebrate Mass.

The Archdiocese of San Salvador released a statement expressing "its sorrow over the murder of Fr. Walter. We express our solidarity with the Diocese of Santiago de María and his relatives." "We urge the appropriate authorities to determine the facts," they added.

According to the National Civil Police of El Salvador, the priest, 36, was stopped and killed "when he was riding in a car to celebrate a Mass in a place known as La Casona." The local press attribute the crime to gangs active in the area.

According to the Italian publication l'Avvenire, three armed men wearing ski masks robbed the priest and other passengers in the vehicle, taking their wallets, watches and cell phones. They then ordered the priest to get out of the car and took him some 150 feet away and shot him. However, Fr. Vásquez was only grazed by the bullet and attempted to flee, when he was then shot again and killed. Witnesses claim it was "an execution." Although the motive for the killing is unknown, l'Avvenire reported that the victim exercised his ministry in a violent area of the country where the gangs extort businesses and the priests often try to provide protection for the inhabitants. They also support young men who do not want to join the gangs.

"We're on the front lines, every day we wonder when they're going to shoot us, and we're surprised they still haven't done it," said a priest whose name was withheld for security reasons.

Cardinal Gregorio Rosa Chávez, emphasized that "we are here along with Fr. Walter to say: Yes to life, yes to love, yes to forgiveness, yes to justice."

Article from CNA/EWTN News

AUDITED TOTAL MISSIO COLLECTION RESULTS PER SACBC DIOCESE FROM 2013 TO 2017 & AVERAGE
SHOWING PERCENTAGE DIFFERENCE YEAR TO YEAR (“-” indicates a % decrease in donations)

DIOCESE	2013	2014	%	2015	%	2016	%	2017	%	AVERAGE
JOHANNESBURG	R629.543,48	R551.123,97	-12,46%	R630.050,30	14,32%	R786.768,72	24,87%	R645.329,55	-17,98%	R648.563,20
CAPE TOWN	R507.927,66	R520.918,24	2,56%	R533.349,73	2,39%	R561.324,02	5,25%	R582.254,54	3,73%	R541.154,84
DURBAN	R166.950,00	R161.031,99	-3,54%	R220.677,72	37,04%	R316.074,12	43,23%	R88.177,34	-72,10%	R190.582,23
PRETORIA	R150.625,90	R139.758,10	-7,22%	R157.055,70	12,38%	R218.164,90	38,91%	R271.552,60	24,47%	R187.431,44
KIMBERLEY	R119.815,30	R145.420,00	21,37%	R147.169,00	1,20%	R251.661,00	71,00%	R267.991,70	6,49%	R186.411,40
GABORONE	R183.775,65	R200.000,00	8,83%	R216.895,50	8,45%	R109.364,50	-49,58%	R131.348,55	20,10%	R168.276,84
PORT ELIZABETH	R122.957,01	R131.272,69	6,76%	R157.624,07	20,07%	R134.616,98	-14,60%	R159.670,70	18,61%	R141.228,29
WITBANK	R128.856,52	R112.556,90	-12,65%	R143.606,85	27,59%	R145.617,01	1,40%	R119.037,80	-18,25%	R129.935,02
MANZINI	R67.676,70	R98.008,80	44,82%	R71.637,60	-26,91%	R89.991,85	25,62%	R122.180,60	35,77%	R89.899,11
KEIMOES	R72.000,00	R65.371,90	-9,21%	R67.736,00	3,62%	R76.610,00	13,10%	R87.367,00	14,04%	R73.816,98
MARIANHILL	R40.417,85	R66.705,70	65,04%	R82.759,10	24,07%	R76.757,30	-7,25%	R80.000,00	4,22%	R69.327,99
RUSTENBURG	R55.379,62	R62.109,60	12,15%	R73.831,10	18,87%	R61.226,20	-17,07%	R72.000,00	17,60%	R64.909,30
POLOKWANE	R58.113,20	R69.749,75	20,02%	R29.878,50	-57,16%	R30.561,46	2,29%	R125.791,40	311,60%	R62.818,86
OUTDSHOORN	R62.191,85	R52.885,84	-14,96%	R59.850,10	13,17%	R57.706,20	-3,58%	R58.306,31	1,04%	R58.188,06
FRANCISTOWN	R45.536,17	R35.437,47	-22,18%	R48.974,98	38,20%	R56.642,82	15,66%	R62.273,57	9,94%	R49.773,00
TZANEEN	R26.869,55	R22.126,60	-17,65%	R59.328,95	168,13%	R59.476,00	0,25%	R76.190,63	28,10%	R48.798,35
BETHLEHEM	R40.853,65	R41.219,80	0,90%	R46.066,01	11,76%	R51.583,10	11,98%	R45.153,50	-12,46%	R44.975,21
ESHOWE	R53.513,03	R54.427,45	1,71%	R41.496,25	-23,76%	R42.495,50	2,41%	R28.411,50	-33,14%	R44.068,75
KROONSTAD	R22.609,45	R30.795,80	36,21%	R36.208,00	17,57%	R45.888,00	26,73%	R47.335,00	3,15%	R36.567,25
KOKSTAD	R44.865,00	R30.000,00	-33,13%	R42.861,50	42,87%	R48.687,30	13,59%	R16.128,00	-66,87%	R36.508,36
ALIWAL	R31.858,00	R32.817,95	3,01%	R41.307,60	25,87%	R33.808,00	-18,16%	R33.350,10	-1,35%	R34.628,33
MTHATHA	R22.687,95	R26.773,40	18,01%	R28.886,00	7,89%	R41.187,80	42,59%	R45.384,30	10,19%	R32.983,89
DUNDEE	R30.568,35	R30.639,85	0,23%	R35.750,10	16,68%	R32.326,00	-9,58%	R31.500,00	-2,56%	R32.156,86
UMZIMKULU	R25.910,95	R40.112,85	54,81%	R37.216,10	-7,22%	R29.919,10	-19,61%	R19.784,00	-33,88%	R30.588,60
INGWAVUMA	R28.000,00	R25.500,00	-8,93%	R29.207,00	14,54%	R33.188,10	13,63%	R30.560,50	-7,92%	R29.291,12
KLERKSDORP	R36.009,30	R31.999,70	-11,13%	R18.000,00	-43,75%	R28.800,00	60,00%	R30.000,00	4,17%	R28.961,80
QUEENSTOWN	R10.814,70	R19.067,70	76,31%	R17.850,30	-6,38%	R10.046,49	-43,72%	R23.368,89	132,61%	R16.229,62
DE AAR	R15.158,55	R16.385,50	8,09%	R15.870,50	-3,14%	R15.055,80	-5,13%	R15.962,50	6,02%	R15.686,57
BLOEMFONTEIN	R14.304,80	R16.516,40	15,46%	R10.137,70	-38,62%	R17.736,70	74,96%	R17.162,50	-3,24%	R15.171,62
TOTALS	R2.815.790,19	R2.830.733,95	0,53%	R3.101.282,26	9,56%	R3.463.284,97	11,67%	R3.333.573,08	-3,75%	R3.108.932,89

VATICAN GATHERS STATISTICS ON POPE FRANCIS' 5TH ANNIVERSARY

On the occasion of Pope Francis' 5th anniversary, the statistics gathered by the Holy See's Press Office helps us reflect on the importance of his Papacy.

On 19 March, 2013, the Solemnity of St Joseph, Pope Francis celebrated Mass inaugurating his pontificate. Since then, the 81 year old pontiff has certainly left his mark on the Church. The statistics put together by the Holy See's Press Office give us but an outline of Pope Francis' papacy.

In the footsteps of John Paul II and Benedict XVI
Pope Francis has demonstrated that he is continuing in the footsteps of both John Paul II and Benedict XVI. The themes of both synods – the Family and young people – were very dear to John Paul II. And both Encyclicals have connections with Benedict XVI. The first, *Lumen Fidei*, is based on a manuscript begun by Pope Benedict and concludes his Encyclicals on Faith, Hope and Charity. The second, *Laudato Si'*, not only cites Pope Benedict numerous times, but also treats a recurring theme from Pope Benedict's pontificate.

Pope Francis' Signature

But Pope Francis is also leaving his own mark on the Papacy, one which is rooted in his formation and pastoral experience in Argentina. The creation of a special Council of Cardinals to assist him in the reform of the Roman Curia is a concrete example of the collegiality that Pope Francis embraces.

Perhaps most remarkable of all is the Pope's affable and affectionate personality which shines through every public and personal encounter with him. Francis is a Pope who enters into the everyday lives of people with phone calls and letters, with "Good evening", "enjoy your lunch", and "please don't forget to pray for me."

Statistics released by the Holy See's Press Office:

Encyclicals:

Lumen fidei (20 June 2013)

Laudato si' (24 May 2015)

Apostolic Exhortations:

Evangelii gaudium (24 November 2013)

Amoris laetitia (19 March 2016)

Bulls: *Misericordiae vultus* (11 April 2015)

Motu Proprios:

3 in 2013 2 in 2014 4 in 2015

9 in 2016 4 in 2017 1 in 2018

General audiences: 219

Themes of the Wednesday Catechesis:

Profession of Faith

The Sacraments

The Gifts of the Holy Spirit

The Church

The Family

Mercy

Christian hope

The Holy Mass

Angelus/Regina Coeli: 286

International trips: 22

Pope Francis has travelled a total of 250,000km visiting: Brasil, Jordan, Palestine, Israel, South Korea, Albania, the European Parliament in Strasbourg, France, Turkey, Sri Lanka, the Philippines, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ecuador,

Bolivia, Paraguay, Cuba, the United States, Kenya, Uganda, Central African Republic, Mexico, Greece, Armenia, Poland, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Sweden, Egypt, Portugal, Colombia, Myanmar, Bangladesh, Chile and Peru.

Trips within Italy: 18

Pastoral visits to the parishes of Rome: 16

Synods:

III Extraordinary Synod on the Family (5-19 October 2014)

XIV Ordinary Synod on the Family (4-25 October 2015)

XVI Ordinary Synod on Youth (3-18 October 2018)

Special Synod on the Amazon (October 2019)

Special Years:

Year of Consecrated Life (29 November 2014–2 February 2016)

Extraordinary Holy Year of Mercy (8 December 2015–20 November 2016)

Special Months:

Extraordinary Missionary month (October 2019)

World Days:

World Day of fasting and prayer for Peace I: Syria (7 September 2013)

24 Hours for the Lord a Friday in Lent (inaugurated in 2014)

World day of prayer for creation: 1 September (inaugurated in 2015)

World day of the poor: 23rd Sunday of Ordinary Time (inaugurated in 2017)

Sunday of the Word: One Sunday during the Liturgical Year (inaugurated in 2017)

World Day of Migrants and Refugees: Second Sunday of September (inaugurated 14 January 2018)

World day of prayer and fasting for peace II: South Sudan, Congo and Syria (23 February 2018)

World Youth Days:

28th World Day in Rio de Janeiro: 23-28 July 2013

31st World Day in Krakow: 26-31 July 2016

34th World Day in Panama: 22-27 January 2019

Consistories for the creation of Cardinals:

Pope Francis has created a total of 61 cardinals. Of these, 49 are electors and 12 are non-electors (one has died)

19 Cardinals created on 22 February 2014

20 Cardinals created on 14 February 2015

17 Cardinals created on 19 November 2016

5 Cardinals created on 28 June 2017

Canonizations:

Pope Francis has canonized a total of 880 saints,

800 of whom are the Martyrs of Otranto

9 canonization ceremonies in the Vatican

3 canonizations ceremonies outside of the Vatican:

United States, Sri Lanka, Portugal

5 canonizations equipollent

Article: Sr Bernadette Mary Reis FSP / Vatican News

