

Dear brothers and sisters,

If the pandemic has taught us anything, then it is perhaps the realisation that we all need one another. During the past 19 months many of us will have found that we have grown closer to our family, our friends and our neighbours. There are lots of stories of people helping others in their street with whom they had never really had a conversation until lockdown. Somehow, adversity also inspired us to find more ways to contact one another. Even our grannies have become experts at using an iPad.

Sadly, many people died, and our hearts and prayers go out to those families who did not have the chance to have a proper funeral, a proper chance to grieve together.

Looking back, though, there are many things we have to thank God for: the support of others, the chance to at least attend Mass online, the opportunity to pray more and to reflect on what is important in our life.

Today's first reading speaks of God's promise to deliver his people from exile and the responsorial psalm is a thanksgiving for having been brought home – *What marvels the Lord worked for us! Indeed we were glad.* The idea of looking back and looking forward are contained in the theme chosen by Pope Francis for this year's World Mission Sunday:

*We cannot remain silent about what we have seen and heard.*

This phrase is taken from the Acts of the Apostles and it is the response of St. Peter and St. John when they were forbidden to preach the Good News.

The apostles and disciples in the early Church lived with Jesus. They witnessed the miracles, heard him speak and saw at first-hand his death, resurrection and ascension. They were then led by the Holy Spirit to go out to the whole world to proclaim what they had seen and heard. That has continued for the past 2,000 years so that now the Church is present in every country and in every culture. An essential part of the life of the early Church and in the centuries which followed was how different communities helped one another.

Missio – the Pontifical Mission Societies – is the Pope's charity, and your charity, to enable all of us in today's Church to share what we have with one another and particularly to help those who are in need. Through Missio, the Catholics of Scotland have built the first churches in mission countries, helped feed and educate children, helped nuns and religious set up clinics and hospitals and enabled young men and women to enter the priesthood and religious life. World Mission Sunday is the one day during the year when Catholics worldwide can demonstrate solidarity with one another, when we can show that the Church is a family and is a way of acknowledging how we need one another through financial support and prayer.

Among the projects we are asking you to help fund this year is a project for young people in Fiji in the Pacific Ocean and another to help children in Papua New Guinea. We have chosen to highlight these because, as well as being places where the poverty is extreme, these islands are also under severe threat from climate change. You can read more about the

projects in copies of the magazine we have sent to your parish and on our Missio Scotland website.

Pope Francis sees a direct link between climate change and poverty. We can, he says, only care for our planet if, at the same time, we also care for those who are poor in our world. In some ways the pandemic has been a test for us to start seeing a different way of living together in our 'common home'. This will be part of the message which Pope Francis will give to the COP26 meeting on climate change which will take place in Glasgow next month.

Through your donations to Missio Scotland over the past year you have been able to help poor parishes and communities in Africa, Asia and South America which have had to struggle with the pandemic without the vaccines or medical care that we have here in Scotland. In their name I wish to thank you for all you have given, both financially and through your prayers.

On this World Mission Sunday I appeal to you, on behalf of Pope Francis, to give what you can and to pray for a better and safer world for all of us.

Yours sincerely in Christ,

Fr. Vincent Lockhart

National Director of Missio Scotland