



PASTORAL LETTER FOR THE EXTRAORDINARY MONTH OF MISSION 2019

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

We may not be rich, but we do like to have things the way we want them. We can be quite put out if our normal routine is upset. We like to be comfortable and secure. But our Gospel challenges that way of looking at things. The rich man in the Gospel found out too late that his life of comfort had led to him ignoring the poor man, Lazarus, at the gate of his house.

The readings at Mass are a wake-up call to look beyond ourselves and to put into action our baptismal vocation of loving service especially to those in need. How grateful I am to the St. Vincent de Paul Parish Conferences and the other Parish organisations who do such great charitable work in the name of Jesus.

Pope Francis also wants us to have a greater consciousness of our responsibility to pass on the Gospel at home and abroad. He has designated this coming month of October as an Extraordinary Month of Mission. It is a time for us to recognise ourselves as missionary disciples, working and praying together to share God's love with everyone, everywhere.

It is not rocket science. It just requires a humble openness to God's grace in the opportunities we have in conversation with others. As the soon to be canonised Blessed John Henry Newman's motto states, "Heart speaks unto heart."

I was given a great example on the way back from the Lourdes Pilgrimage. I was boarding the plane with a parishioner from Bedford. As we stood in the queue, she started chatting with an Italian vet living in Cardiff. He mentioned that he had called in to Lourdes and had lit a candle. It reminded him of his mother's devotion and of what he was missing since he had stopped practising his faith. The Bedford parishioner listened and then encouraged him to find his local church. She almost persuaded him to go back to Lourdes next year to help on the pilgrimage!

I have no doubt that God's grace was at work on those aircraft steps, and I have no doubt that God's grace is at work in the Church's missionary activity around the world. The Extraordinary Month of Mission is an opportunity to increase our prayer and financial support for the missions whether it is through individual mission projects which many parishes have or through the agency of Missio, which is a global network of support for the

Pope in his missionary commitment – by prayer, the soul of mission, and charitable offerings from Christians throughout the world. Of course, that will be a particular focus on World Mission Sunday on 20 October.

This Sunday, 29 September, is the 169th anniversary of the establishment of our Diocese. It is a moment for giving thanks for the mission of the Church in our parishes and especially for our priests, past and present, and for the priests from Africa and Asia and elsewhere who now support us in that mission.

Today, the Church needs men and women who respond generously to the call to leave behind family, country, language and local Church, and be sent forth to the nations, to a world not yet transformed by the sacrament of Jesus Christ and his holy Church.

May the grace of God touch us all in the Extraordinary Month of Mission, and help us to recognise that each of us is a mission to the world, because each of us is the fruit of God's love.

With every blessing,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a cross symbol followed by the name 'Peter'.

Bishop of Northampton

*To be read and/or made available at all Masses of
the weekend of the 28/29 September 2019.*