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**World Mission Sunday  
20<sup>th</sup> October 2024**

***“Go and invite everyone to the banquet”***

Dear brothers and sisters,

There are many people we may never hear of but we ***should*** hear of: the ones who look after others, who give their lives in service. We all know people who are like that. People who do not, like James and John in the gospel, seek personal glory or advantage. They just get on quietly with what needs to be done.

The suffering servant in today’s first reading from the prophet Isaiah is an example of someone who *offers his life* and *by his sufferings* justifies many, *taking their faults on himself*. That prophecy of Isaiah reaches its fulfilment in Jesus on the Cross and Jesus himself tells us in today’s gospel that he did not come to be served but to serve.

Sr Hedwig Vinyo, a Franciscan Sister, is a powerful example of someone who has dedicated her life to serving others – especially those who are in need. She is from Cameroon in West Africa and grew up in the area she now works in, the North-West Province of the country.

In the midst of a civil war which has been raging for the past 7 years in the English-speaking part of Cameroon, Sr Hedwig and the Tertiary Sisters of St Francis are helping those tragically affected by the war to pick up the pieces of their lives. They have been taking care of some of the 628,000 refugees and the young people and children with disabilities whose families have been killed.

For the sisters, serving God means gathering those broken by the war, providing them with care, support and a safe place. As the responsorial psalm put it: *“to rescue their souls from death, to keep them alive in famine”*.

Your donations today will enable Sr Hedwig and her sisters to serve those suffering because of the war, a war we never hear much about here. Also with your help, Missio Scotland will give funding to the Catholic Women’s Association – a Cameroonian organisation similar to the Union of Catholic Mothers here in Scotland – who are supporting displaced people who have taken refuge in their parishes.

Gathering those who have been broken, inviting everyone to join together in a place of peace is the focus of Pope Francis’ theme for this World Mission Sunday. He recalls the scene in the Gospel of Matthew where the king tells his servants to *“go and invite everyone to the banquet”*.

Our mission, the mission of every follower of Christ, is to bring people together in unity to experience the love of God. As the Holy Father says in his message,

“Today, in a world torn apart by divisions and conflicts, Christ’s Gospel calls individuals to encounter one another, to recognise that they are brothers and sisters, and to rejoice in harmony amid diversity. Let us never forget, that we are asked to preach the Gospel to all.”

In receiving the Eucharist in our parish today, we do so with all our brothers and sisters across the globe who are taking part in the Mass on this World Mission Sunday. The Eucharist is a sign and source of our unity but, as Pope Francis says, “we cannot approach the Eucharistic table without being drawn into the mission which is meant to reach all people”.

That ‘mission’ to every person on our planet is an essential part of our Catholic identity and has been since the very early days of the Church. The Scottish Catholic community reaches out to the world beyond our shores through Missio Scotland and SCIAF. They are an expression of our community, our faith and our sharing concretely in the mission Christ has given us.

Missio – the Pontifical Mission Societies – is where the Church in one place supports the Church in another place. Each Catholic community prays for all the other Catholic communities both here in Scotland and abroad and shares finances if they are needed. That mutual exchange of prayers and money creates solidarity, a sense of the Church as one universal family, and gives joy to God who is the Father of us all. It gives meaning to our saying together the response to the responsorial psalm: *May your love be upon us, O Lord, as we place all our hope in you.*

So today, as we accept the invitation to come to the Eucharistic banquet and celebrate the reality of the Church as one family, Pope Francis asks each of us to be generous with our prayers and donations for other Catholic communities throughout the world, especially those in mission countries who need to feel that we are there for them.

Thank you for your prayers and for all you have given over the years.

Wishing you and your parish the unity, peace and joy of God.

Yours sincerely in Christ,

*Fr. Vincent Lockhart*

Fr Vincent Lockhart  
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