



DIOCESE OF GRAND RAPIDS

Office of the Bishop

October 2019

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

This year, **October 20**, marks a very special **World Mission Sunday**, our annual, worldwide Eucharistic celebration of our shared call to mission. It takes place during an Extraordinary Missionary Month, called for by Pope Francis in honor of the 100th anniversary of Pope Benedict XV's Apostolic Letter *Maximum Illud*, which emphasized the missionary call to proclaim the Gospel.

During this month of October, Pope Francis invites us - all baptized Christians - to a *personal encounter* with Jesus Christ through prayer, meditation on the Word of God, and pilgrimage. We move beyond the typical "heroic vision" of missionaries and reinforce the transforming relationship between faith and the world to which we are all called. Pope Francis reminds us that we are *each* "Baptized and Sent"; we are *all* the "Church of Christ on Mission in the World."

I invite all of us in this diocese to take this opportunity to revitalize our ardor, passion, and zeal for the faith with loving missionary hearts. We can respond to our missionary call through *charity*, giving generously to the collection for the **Society for the Propagation of the Faith** on World Mission Sunday. Your gifts support and sustain priests, religious and lay pastoral leaders in more than 1,100 mission dioceses in Asia, Africa, the Pacific Islands, and parts of Latin America and Europe as they proclaim the Gospel, build the Church, and serve the poor.

And we can respond to this call through *mirroring the loving witness exemplified by great missionaries*, like martyred Sister Dorothy Stang, SNDdeN, a model for missionary witness to our faith and the Gospel, and a passionate advocate for care of our common home, and outreach to indigenous communities.

As I thank you for your continuous commitment to mission, I share my personal gratitude for your generous response on this day, and throughout the Extraordinary Missionary Month, as you are able. Let us join our hearts in the prayer of our Holy Father for this special moment for the Missions: "*May the love for the Church's Mission, which is a passion for Jesus and a passion for His people, 'grow ever stronger!'*"

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend David J. Walkowiak
Bishop of Grand Rapids