World MISSION SUNDAY

WHAT WE GIVE — AND WHAT WE RECEIVE

BY ARCHBISHOP THOMAS G. WENSKI
ARCHBISHOP OF MIAMI

Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

World Mission Sunday, October 18 this year, marks the 100th anniversary of this worldwide day of prayer and giving to support the activities of the Church in "mission lands". Pope Leo XIV has chosen a theme that expresses beautifully what World Mission Sunday is about: "One in Christ, united in mission." Our unity in Christ means that we belong to one another and we share in a common mission: to bring the gospel to all nations. World Mission Sunday allows us to express an affective solidarity with those working in mission lands to spread the gospel; and the collection taken up at all Masses throughout the world also allows us to express an effective solidarity with them by helping to provide them with resources to carry out their mission. The Pontifical Mission Societies manage and distribute what is collected on World Mission Sunday on behalf of the Pope.

"One in Christ, united in mission," we are asked to support those who work in "mission fields" far from our home parishes. Today, in more than 1,100 mission territories around the world, local Churches depend upon the prayers and generosity of Catholics elsewhere. Through the World Mission Sunday collection, we help form seminarians and religious, support catechists, sustain priests and dioceses, and provide the basic resources that allow the Church to proclaim the Gospel in communities across the globe.

Pope Leo XIV, who knows missionary life personally from his more than 20 years of service in Peru, reminds us in his message for this year's World Mission Sunday that the Church is called to bring God's faithful love "to all people, especially those who are most in need." For 100 years, World Mission Sunday has given Catholics a concrete way to answer that call together. As a young priest, like Pope Leo, I too was a missionary priest – but a missionary priest in my own "backyard". After a brief time in Haiti, I devoted almost 20 years of my ministry in South Florida to Haitian Catholics as they struggled to build new lives in this country.

One of the great lessons of my priesthood was that mission is never one-way street. Like other missionaries, I learned that I received more than I gave from the people I served. The distinction between a Church that "gives" and a Church that "receives" is never as simple as it might appear. Here in the Archdiocese of Miami, we have given generously but we have received so much more. That we are members of a "universal" Church that embraces "all nations" is visible every day. Our local Church has been immeasurably enriched by Catholics who came here from Haiti, Cuba, Nicaragua, Venezuela and countries throughout Latin America and the Caribbean. They brought with them their languages, devotions, traditions but, above all, their faith. My encounters with their resilient faith, their deep trust in God's providence that remained strong even amid tremendous hardship helped me to appreciate what it means to belong to a truly universal church.

This centennial year is particularly meaningful for the Church in the United States. On September 24th, we celebrated the beatification of Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen, who spent 16 years as National Director of The Pontifical Mission Societies, which oversees the World Mission Sunday collection on behalf of the Pope.

Archbishop Sheen worked tirelessly to enlarge the missionary imagination of American Catholics. He wanted us to understand that the Church extends far beyond the boundaries of our own parish or country, and that the needs of Catholics half a world away concern us precisely because they are members of the same Body of Christ.

That message should resonate deeply with us in South Florida. We know from our own families and parishes that borders do not divide the Body of Christ. In the Church, there are no strangers. There are only brothers and sisters, called together to be one in Christ, united in mission. On October 18, I ask you to pray for missionaries and for the communities they serve. And when the World Mission Sunday collection is taken up in your parish, please give generously according to your means.

Sincerely Yours in Christ,

+T. Wenski

Most Reverend Thomas Wenski
Archbishop of Miami