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MISSION MESSAGE

**Missionary Cooperative Program:
Witnessing Faith in Action**

*By Shannon Kowalski
Diocesan Director,
Pontifical Mission Societies*




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It is not uncommon for new or unfamiliar faces to fill our pews during the summer months, especially in some of our rural parishes that welcome snowbirds or summer vacationers.

Sometimes, the cantor, lector, or even the priest will invite us to turn and greet our neighbors in the pews. This invitation often stretches us beyond our comfort zones to an act of hospitality and community.

The call to welcome the stranger is deeply rooted in Catholic teaching and scripture.

In Matthew 25:35, Jesus says, "For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me."

This mandate is clear: Christians are to show hospitality and love to all, especially to those who are foreign or marginalized. Let's remember, there is joy in

welcoming the stranger, for in doing so, we welcome Christ himself.

Beyond snowbirds, summer vacationers, and visiting family and friends, you will likely see another unfamiliar face at your parish this summer. If you haven't already met the missionary hosted by your parish for the Missionary Cooperative Plan, you will soon!



Between May and August, dozens of lay and religious missionaries from around the world will be visiting each of our parishes to share firsthand accounts of their work in diverse and often challenging environments.

The Missionary Cooperative Plan (MCP) of the Pontifical Mission Societies invites missionary organizations to share their experiences and needs directly with our parishes, creating a personal and impactful connection between the local faithful and the universal Church. These visits are an opportunity for missionaries to raise essential

funds and bring the mission field to life for parishioners.

The funds collected through MCP appeals support education, healthcare, and social services in some of the poorest regions of the world. Our MCP missionaries not only address these material needs of the poor but also bring spiritual nourishment and the hope of the Gospel.

This evangelization effort is not merely about increasing numbers but about sharing the profound message of Christ's love and salvation.

From Vietnam to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the witness of these missionaries offers us a glimpse into the daily realities and spiritual richness of missionary work. By participating in the MCP, our parishes in the Diocese of Scranton have become active partners in the Church's global mission.

Supporting missions and welcoming strangers are not just acts of charity. They are essential components of living out the Gospel. These efforts remind us that we are all part of one human family, called to love and support one another as brothers and sisters in Christ.

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