



The Holy See

***LETTER OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO CARDINAL IVAN DIAS
PREFET OF THE CONGREGATION
FOR THE EVANGELIZATION OF PEOPLES
ON THE OCCASION OF THE MISSION YEAR IN LISIEUX (FRANCE)***

*To Cardinal Ivan Dias
Prefet of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples*

The Lisieux Pilgrimage and the services of missionary cooperation offered by the French Bishops' Conference wished the year 2007 to be a Mission Year in Lisieux, to remind all Christian communities and all the faithful who come on pilgrimage in the footsteps of St Thérèse of Lisieux that they must be ceaselessly concerned about the mission, after the example of the early Christian communities, so that everywhere Christ may be known and loved. It was in this spirit that 50 years ago Pope Pius XII gave the Encyclical *Fidei Donum* to the Church. Nor should it be forgotten that on 14 December 1927, 80 years ago, in response to requests from all over the world, Pope Pius XI proclaimed a humble Carmelite, St Thérèse of the Child Jesus and of the Holy Face, Patroness of Missions on a footing with St Francis Xavier.

On 21 April 1957, to address one of the concerns at the beginning of his Pontificate, Pope Pius XII invited Christians to renew their attention to the missions to the very ends of the earth, showing that in order to spread the Gospel the contribution of the whole Church was essential. In this spirit and aware of the concern for missionary service of the Church in France, I in turn hope that the missionary vocations of priests, consecrated persons and lay people will continue to develop, following the tradition of all the dedicated people on all continents in the past century. May the Lord instil in the hearts of many young Europeans the desire to spend themselves without counting the cost to proclaim the salvation brought by Christ, especially in Africa, South America, Asia and Oceania.

St Thérèse of Lisieux, who never left her Carmel, through contemplative prayer and the correspondence she maintained with priests - the Abbé Bellière and Fr Roulland - lived an

authentic missionary spirit in her own way, accompanying every person in her Gospel service and giving the world a new spiritual orientation. Only 10 years ago, this obtained for her the title: "Doctor of the Church". From Pius XI to our day, the Popes have not omitted to recall the connection between prayer, charity and action in the Church's mission, so that, as the Second Vatican Council further emphasizes, "the entire world may become the People of God, the Body of the Lord and the Temple of the Holy Spirit" (*Lumen Gentium*, n. 17).

I therefore hope that the celebrations taking place in Lisieux during this Mission Year will strengthen the mission awareness of the baptised in your Country through prayer, witness of life and Christian commitment in all its forms, so that every member of the faithful may be a missionary where he or she lives. I also hope for the birth of vocations to proclaim the Gospel to people who do not yet know it.

I ask the Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church, and St Thérèse of the Child Jesus to obtain that this Mission Year, in which each member of the faithful is asked to cooperate more closely with the joyful proclamation of the Gospel, bear an abundance of spiritual fruit, and I willingly impart my Apostolic Blessing to you, Your Eminence, as well as to the Bishops present, the pilgrims of Lisieux and their families and the lay people who are taking an active part in the organization of this Year.

From the Vatican, 12 September 2007

BENEDICTUS PP. XVI

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