

In order to encourage many vocations for the missions, in his increasingly numerous writings Fr. Manna insisted on the irreplaceable role of priests in the proclamation of the Gospel and in the formation of the missionary awareness of the People of God. The Union spread rapidly after the Pope recommended its presence in every diocese in his Encyclical *Maximum Illud* (1919). With a great activity of preaching and publications, Fr. Manna inflamed ecclesiastics and laity alike with the missionary ideal, while he challenged young people to realize this ideal. For him there is no such thing as a missionary vocation



distinct from the priestly or Christian vocation; his motto is: *"All Missionaries"*. For Fr. Manna all baptized, but above all *"every priest is by his very nature and definition missionary"*. He complained that for a great part of the clergy *"a great elementary truth"* has been obscured, *"namely, that the primary function of the Church is evangelization of the world, the whole world"*. Priests together with the religious and laity are natural mission workers. With the decree of 28<sup>th</sup> October 1956 Pope Pius XII conferred the title "Pontifical" on the union, and it was therefore renamed *"Pontifical Mission Union of the Clergy, Religious and Laity"*. More simply it is known as the *"Pontifical Missionary Union"* (PMU).

The Society of Missionary Union strives

- \* to join all priests, religious men and women and laity in prayer with their missionary brothers and sisters
- \* To promote missionary consciousness among seminarians, priests, religious and laity.
- \* To animate all animators of the People of God for the Mission by spreading and promoting the other Pontifical Mission Societies.
- \* To foster Christian unity so that *"they may be so perfected in unity that the world will recognize that it was you who sent me..."*
- \* To put all in the church *"in a state of mission"*

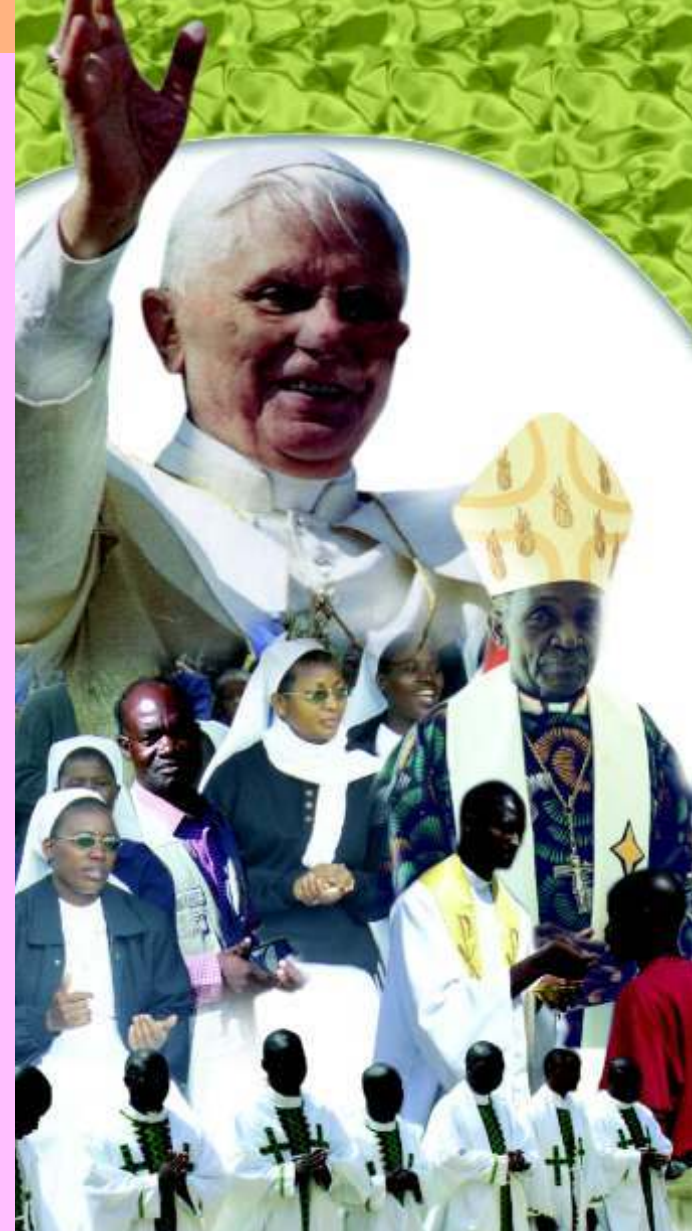
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THE PONTIFICAL

MISSIONARY UNION

## THE PONTIFICAL MISSIONARY UNION.

Unlike the other Societies, the Pontifical Missionary Union has its immediate and specific purpose, the promotion of missionary work and the spread of the Missions, not through aid, but through the direct commitment of those who, like the Apostles, have received the command: *“Go, therefore, make disciples of all nations; baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit...”* (Mt. 28:19).

The Union was founded by Blessed Father Paolo Manna and recognized by Pope Benedict XV on 30<sup>th</sup> October 1916. Blessed Fr. Paolo Manna had a profound and deeply felt experience of the enormous needs of the missions. Born at Avellino, in Italy, on 6<sup>th</sup> January, 1871, he grew up fascinated by accounts he read in



Fr. Paolo Manna  
Founder of the Missionary Union

missionary reviews and resolved to be a missionary.

At the end of 1895, Paolo sailed from Trieste to Burma. He became famous for his linguistic ability and his methods of inculturation. He stated that he did not want to preach in the same way he preached in Europe. He respected their traditions and integrated their ways of speaking and thinking into his work of evangelization. But, paradoxically, his real achievement would not have been possible had he not been forced out of active missionary life in June 1907

by repeated bouts of malaria. At the age of 35 years he saw his future as being very gloomy with all his hopes and plans for good works quite destroyed. However, there were those who sensed where his other talents lay and he was appointed editor of the review for the Milan Institute for Foreign Missions. Fr. Paolo realized the power of the written word and his own abilities in this field and that there was a mission apostolate to be found in the press. He was aware that he himself was but one solitary priest with a deep and abiding interest in foreign missions, but how much more could be achieved if every priest could be fired with a similar enthusiasm. He set out to band all priests together in one association for that purpose. By 1916 he had arrived at the idea of a Missionary Union of the Clergy and obtained approval from Pope Benedict XV on 31<sup>st</sup> October 1916.

