

WORLD MISSION SUNDAY

Mission Diocese of Vijayapuram, India

Base Catholic Communities

“...”The mission of the Church is animated by a spiritual exodus. It is ...to seek paths in which to realize the courage and the impulses of the heart at the service of humanity.”

(Pope Francis, *World Mission Sunday 2017 Message*).

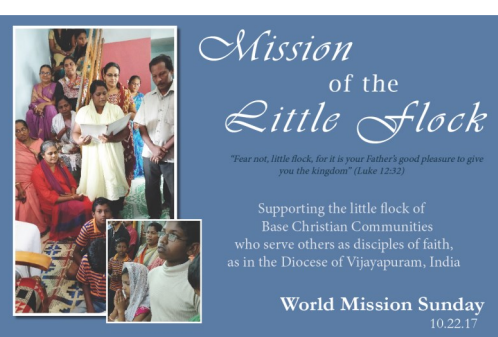
On the weekend of October 21-22, 2017, we join with Catholics around the world to recommit to our missionary identity. Prayers and gifts of support offered on this weekend will benefit over 1,150, often poor and suffering, dioceses and help them to continue their efforts to share the life-giving presence of Christ.

This year's theme, **Mission of the Little Flock**, calls to mind Jesus comforting the first apostles' concerns stating, "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Luke 12:32). The little flock of apostles proclaimed the Gospel as a minority. Today we call up places where the mission Church is a minority, marginalized and persecuted – the little flocks of Jesus. The Roman Catholic Diocese of Vijayapuram, India, is a minority among other Christians and Hindus supporting the poor and disenfranchised.

The Diocese of Vijayapuram is in the Indian state of Kerala on the south western tip of India. Catholic tradition claims that Christianity was introduced in this area by St. Thomas the Apostle in 54 AD. Today the Saint Thomas Christians include Syrian Orthodox, Jacobite Syrians, Syro-Malankara and Syro-Malabar Catholics. Roman Catholicism was introduced to Kerala by St. Francis Xavier in late 16th century. All Christians only account for about 18% of the population, with the Latin rite representing the smallest percentage.

According to tradition, St Thomas focused on sharing the Christian faith with the upper class, or castes, to plant the seed of Good News. In this way, the Christian faith could be well supported and prosper. Unfortunately, the lower castes, Dalits were ignored. The Latin Church through St Francis Xavier changed that as he emphasized serving the poor and disenfranchised. This is the little flock of Latin Catholics serving the little flock of poor, lower castes.

Today, the Roman Catholic Faith continues to serve the little flock who have endured discrimination and violence as a lower caste. The Diocese of Vijayapuram has received help from the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, through World Mission Sunday celebrations, to provide education, homes, food and shelter for orphans, and healthcare.



Mission of the Little Flock

"Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Luke 12:32)

Supporting the little flock of Base Christian Communities who serve others as disciples of faith, as in the Diocese of Vijayapuram, India

World Mission Sunday
10.22.17

In addition, the diocese has established little flocks, Base Christian Communities, to satisfy the spiritual and material needs of the people. The Diocese began this effort in the early 1990's and it has since grown through it's success. Base Christian Communities are intentional groups of about 20 families in parishes who echo the early Church by living the Gospel they hear on Sunday Mass. They take care of and watch out for each other, and provide assistance necessary. They are active Christian communities serving one another. Today, they are supervised by Father Jose Puthenparambil.

The poster for World Mission Sunday depicts one little flock community who served the family of Shibu Vanchithottil by building a home and moving them from their hut. They are meeting in the home for prayer.