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Press Conference to present World Mission Day 2021

At 11.30 this morning, a press conference was livestreamed from the Holy See Press Office to present World Mission Day, to be held on Sunday 24 October, on the theme “We cannot but speak about what we have seen and heard” (*Acts 4:20*).

The speakers at the Press Conference were: His Eminence Cardinal Luis Antonio G. Tagle, prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples; Archbishop Giampietro Dal Toso, president of the Pontifical Mission Societies (PMS) and adjunct secretary of the Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples; and Sr. Alessandra Dalpozzo, Mother General of the Franciscan Handmaids of Mary.

The secretaries of the four Pontifical Mission Societies were also present and available for press interviews: Sr. Roberta Tremarelli, A.M.S.S., secretary general of the Pontifical Society of Missionary Childhood (in Italian); Fr. Tadeusz Jan Nowak, O.M.I., secretary general of the Pontifical Society for the Propagation of the Faith (in English, Italian and Polish); Fr. Guy Bognon, P.S.S., secretary general of the Pontifical Society of Saint Peter the Apostle (in French); Fr. Dinh Anh Nhue Nguyen, O.F.M. Conv., secretary general of the Pontifical Missionary Union (in Italian, English, Russian and Vietnamese).

The following is the intervention by Archbishop Giampietro Dal Toso:

Intervention of Archbishop Giampietro Dal Toso

Good morning to you all,

Thank you for attending, and for your attention. My speech is intended to extend our view beyond this World Mission Day towards 2022, the year in which we will celebrate various anniversaries linked to the missionary world: 400 years of the Congregation, 200 years since the foundation of the first Mission Society, the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, 100 years since the elevation to Pontifical status of three of the four of our Societies. In this great context we will celebrate in Lyon on 22 May the beatification of Pauline Jaricot, the

founder of the first Society.

We have prepared a brief biography of this extraordinary figure, which has been given to you. Of the many elements that I would like to highlight, I would like to emphasise three aspects that make this young woman from Lyon, who died in 1862, modern.

a. She was a young woman. There is much talk at this time about the promotion of women in the Church. A glance at history tells us that women have had an enormous impact on the life of the Church, and this is one of those examples that shows how real inspiration finds a place in the Church, perhaps precisely because it comes from a woman. Let us not forget that in that same 19th century women's religious institutes, dedicated to schools, orphanages, catechesis, missions, and hospitals, flourished; in this case we are dealing with a woman who never entered a convent.

b. Pauline was a great missionary. It seems important to me to highlight that the key to understanding this woman was her missionary zeal. The Society for the Propagation of the Faith, and before that her prayer circles for the mission, the Living Rosary, her attempt to build an ideal "factory" to meet the spiritual needs and promote the dignity of the workers of the time, all were intended to evangelise the French environment and to support the mission in a period of strong de-Christianisation after the French Revolution. In short, I think we can say that she wanted to involve the mission in distant lands so as to evangelise in lands closer to home.

c. To use what she herself said, Pauline is a seed from which a great tree has grown up. She is exceptional not only for the holiness of her life, but for the greatness of the fruits of her work. She set in motion a true spiritual missionary movement thanks to the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, which spread at grass-roots level immediately, also because it was built on a simple but ingenious system: groups of 10 people, who then gathered in 100 and then in a thousand with a person in charge at each level. Less than a year later the Society was recognised by Pius VII and in 1825 the King of France took it under his protection with a gift of 4,000 francs. While in 1822 it raised 22,915 francs, in 1838 it already had 1,343,000, and two years later 2.5 million, 45% of which were collected outside France. The Bulletin of the Society sold 10,000 copies in 1825, yet by 1830 there were already 40,000, not counting translations. Bishop Forbin-Janson turned to Pauline when he wished to apply this model to the nascent Society of the Missionary Childhood. I can say without hesitation that the contribution of the Societies, which originated from this intuition, was essential for the history of the missions in the 19th and 20th centuries, because they involved the base of the Catholic faithful and made them aware of the mission. But this is not only past history: consider that in the current year the Society for the Propagation of the Faith supported 893 ecclesiastical circumscriptions in mission territories with a contribution for current expenses and invested more than \$10 million for the training of catechists, while the Society of Saint Peter the Apostle financed the training of 76,541 seminarians in 746 seminaries. And this topicality is also shown in the fact that in 2000 a new public association of the faithful was born in the diocese of Caserta, inspired by the charism of Pauline Jaricot. A 23-year-old girl set in motion something that even she would not have imagined and from which the Church has benefited and continues to benefit. And Sr Alessandra Dalpozzo, who will speak after me, will illustrate one of these thousands of evangelisation projects.

I would like to conclude that all this has also been possible because of the support of the Popes, who have regularly promoted the charism of the Pontifical Mission Societies, just as Pope Francis has done with this year's Message. Already in 2016, on the occasion of the 90th anniversary of World Mission Day, Pope Francis wrote: "It is appropriate to recall the wise instructions of my Predecessors who ordered that to this society be destined all the offerings collected in every diocese, parish, religious community, association and ecclesial movement throughout the world for the care of Christian communities in need and for supporting the proclamation of the Gospel even to the ends of the earth. Today too we believe in this sign of missionary ecclesial communion".
