

One in Christ, United in Mission: Ballarat joins a century of global mission

As Catholics around the world marked the 100th World Mission Sunday on October 18, Bishop Mark Freeman is inviting parishes across the Diocese of Ballarat to unite with Pope Leo XIV and the universal Church, reminding communities that no parish is too small or too distant to share in the Church's mission.

For a century, one Sunday in October has invited Catholics to look beyond the boundaries of their own parish, diocese and country and remember something fundamental: we belong to a Church without borders.

This year, that invitation carried particular significance. On Sunday, October 18, Catholics around the world marked the 100th World Mission Sunday, a celebration established by Pope Pius XI in 1926.

For the centenary, Pope Leo XIV chose the theme "One in Christ, United in Mission", calling the Church to continue its missionary journey with what he describes as "joy and zeal in the Holy Spirit".

Across the Diocese of Ballarat, Bishop Mark Freeman is inviting parishes to be part of that global movement for the month of October.

His message carries particular resonance across a diocese encompassing communities large and small: every parish, "no matter its size or location", shares in Christ's mission to proclaim the Gospel and accompany sisters and brothers throughout the world.

It is an invitation that reaches beyond supporting a project overseas. It asks Catholics to rediscover what it means to be missionary wherever they find themselves, and what it means to belong to a Church whose bonds of faith extend far beyond geography.





A collection with a century behind it

World Mission Month and in particular World Mission Sunday has a distinctive place in the life of the Catholic Church.

In his message for this year's centenary, Pope Leo recalls that the celebration was established in 1926 following a proposal from the Society of the Propagation of the Faith, one of the Pontifical Mission Societies.

A century later, the offerings made on World Mission Sunday continue to be distributed through the Society, on behalf of the Pope, to support the missionary needs of local Churches around the world.

Here in Australia, that mission is carried forward through Catholic Mission, the Pope's international mission agency in Australia, working with local bishops, priests, religious and lay leaders to strengthen communities through education, healthcare, pastoral care and the formation of future Church leaders.

But Pope Leo's message makes clear that mission cannot be reduced to money. "No baptised person is exempt from or indifferent to mission," he writes. Each Christian, according to their vocation and circumstances, has a part to play.

From Ballarat to Malawi

This year, the World Mission Appeal in the Diocese of Ballarat will help Catholics stand alongside the local Church and families in Kampira Village, Malawi.

In 2022, Cyclone Ana caused the Shire River to burst its banks in southern Malawi, washing away villages and forcing families from their homes.

Today, more than 500 families live in Kampira on the plains of the Diocese of Chikwawa. Many are rebuilding their lives after the disaster, but for their children, rebuilding a future also means gaining access to education.



Reach out. Give life.

For children in remote communities, simply getting to school can mean travelling several kilometres each day. Among them is Yamikani*, a young boy living with a physical disability who travels several kilometres to reach his current school.

His ambition is striking in its simplicity: he hopes one day to become a driver, earn an income and support himself. The local Church is working to bring that possibility closer.

Together with the community, Fr Matthew Semba, Director of Social Services for the Diocese of Chikwawa, is overseeing the construction of St Peter's Nyamikuta Primary School in Kampira. The new school will bring education closer to local children. Plans also include nutritious meals, educational supplies and shade trees to help protect the community from extreme weather.

"This project encourages them to seek something bigger, to look forward to something greater," Fr Matthew says. It is a school being built in Malawi. But the story behind it reaches much further.

*Name changed to protect the child's identity.

Not charity at a distance

The kilometres between western Victoria and southern Malawi are considerable. But World Mission Month asks Catholics to see that distance differently.

Catholic Mission's approach is not to arrive in communities such as Kampira with an Australian solution. It is to walk alongside the local Church, supporting people such as Fr Matthew and communities who understand their own circumstances, needs and hopes.

That relationship works in the other direction too.

A child in Kampira and a family gathering for Mass in Ballarat, Warrnambool, Horsham, Mildura, Portland or another community across the Diocese may never meet.

They may speak different languages. Their landscapes, cultures and daily lives may be very different. But neither is a stranger to the other. They are part of the same Body of Christ.

That is what gives Pope Leo's theme, "One in Christ, United in Mission", particular force in this centenary year. The Pope writes that Christian unity is not an end in itself; it sends the Church



outward in mission. He describes that mission as one "born of love, lived in love, and leading to love."

An invitation to Ballarat

As part of World Mission Month, Bishop Mark invites communities across the Diocese of Ballarat to take their place in that century-long story.

Parishes will mark World Mission Month through prayer, reflection and participation in the World Mission Appeal, joining Catholics throughout Australia and around the world.

In his message to parishes, Bishop Mark thanks parish communities for helping to keep the Church's "missionary spirit alive within our diocese". His hope is that World Mission Month will become an opportunity "to deepen our communion with the universal Church and to walk ever more closely with our brothers and sisters throughout the world."

For Pope Leo, mission belongs to every baptised person.

It can be expressed through prayer. Through generosity. Through sharing another person's story. Through helping a parish community look beyond itself. Through choosing to accompany people we may never meet.

Perhaps that is ultimately what World Mission Sunday has been reminding the Church for 100 years.

Mission is not the work of someone else, somewhere else.

It is the calling of the whole Church.

No parish is too small. No community is too distant. No act of solidarity is insignificant.

One in Christ, United in Mission.

And from Ballarat to Malawi, distance does not make us strangers.



RESOURCES

Bishop Mark Freeman - World Mission Month video message

[WATCH / DOWNLOAD BISHOP MARK'S VIDEO](#)

Bishop Mark Freeman – World Mission Month letter to parishes

[DOWNLOAD BISHOP MARK'S LETTER](#)

Watch: Kampira, Malawi - World Mission Month 2026

[Watch the official Malawi film](#)

Pope Leo XIV - Message for the 100th World Mission Day

[Read Pope Leo XIV's centenary message](#)

Parish resources

Bulletin notices, liturgical resources, speaking notes, social media materials and appeal resources are available through the [Catholic Mission parish resource hub](#).

Photos and video assets

[CATHOLIC MISSION MEDIA ASSETS](#)

For further enquiries

Cruz Ignatius

Province Director - Victoria & Tasmania

Diocesan Director – Diocese of Ballarat / Catholic Mission

Catholic Mission - the Pope's international mission agency in Australia

Email: cignatius@catholicmission.org.au

Mobile: +61 458 685 844