MISSION MESSAGE

Go Home and Love Your Family



By Shannon Ruiz
Diocesan Director,
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"If you want to change the world, go home and love your family."

These words, attributed to Saint Teresa of Calcutta, seem so simple. She spent her life with the poorest of the poor and those dying in the streets of Calcutta, and when people asked how they could follow her example, she often pointed them back to their own front door.

Next week we celebrate Thanksgiving, and for a lot of us, the mission field is about to get real. The holidays come with plenty of good times and happy memories; but they can also bring drama. After the travel, hours of cooking, and the dishes piling up, it doesn't take much for old arguments to find their way back to the table. The turkey isn't done, everyone's hungry, and patience wears thin. Somebody says the wrong thing and somebody else takes it the wrong way.

I know this from experience. I've had family gatherings when I was more focused on everything



going the right way than on loving the people in front of me, and moments when I wished I could take back the words before they left my mouth. If that sounds familiar, you're not alone. Even the saints had relatives.

So this year, I am going to try something different, and I'd like to invite you to try it with me. Let's think of ourselves as missionaries. A missionary does not wait for ideal conditions. They go where God has planted them and try to make Christ's love visible through ordinary acts. At home, it might mean pausing before we respond to the remark that gets under our skin, offering to wash the dishes, or simply listening to a relative tell the same story for the tenth time.

Begin with prayer. Before the guests arrive, or before you head out on the road, ask the Holy Spirit for a missionary heart. Pray for patience with the difficult conversation you are dreading, and for the grace to see Christ in each person at your table, *especially* the ones who test you most.

Then let that prayer take shape in action. Here are a few ideas:

Open your table. Is there an elderly neighbor who will spend Thanksgiving or Christmas alone? Invite them to join your family or bring them a meal.

Feed the hungry. Consider preparing an extra meal to share with a family in need, donating to your parish food pantry, or volunteering at a local soup kitchen.

Make peace. If there is a strained relationship in your family, take the first step. A phone call, a note, or a sincere apology may do more than you think.

Be present. Give the gift of your full attention. Set the phone down, let the list go, and be present to the people in front of you.

None of this requires a plane ticket or a passport; it requires only a willing heart.

As we prepare to celebrate Thanksgiving and Christmas, may we remember with a grateful heart that Christ came to dwell among us, coming into this world in a manger in an ordinary town. Jesus shows us that love begins close to home.

This holiday season, let's go home and love our families well. The world has to start changing somewhere.

Apostleship of Prayer

Papal Intention for December 2026

For Single-Parent Families —
Let us pray for families experiencing the absence of a mother or father, that they may find support and accompaniment in the Church, and help and strength in the Faith during difficult times.

PONTIFICAL MISSION SOCIETIES IN THE UNITED STATES

The Society for the Propagation of the Faith
Missionary Childhood Association
The Society of St. Peter the Apostle
Missionary Union of Priests and Religious

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Bird-in-Hand Market, Kitchen Kettle Village and Amish Farmhouse Dining, Lancaster - April 14 • $95
A shopping Extravaganza!! Join us as we visit the Market and the many stores at the Village and then enjoy a home-cooked meal at a true Amish farmhouse.

"JONAH" Sight & Sound, Lancaster
May 1 • $200 • Enjoy the story of Jonah & his plight with the whale. Exc. front, center seats. Incl. Hershey Farms Smorgasbord.

Green Dragon Farmer's Market and Auction, Lancaster - June 18 • $65
Voted "Best Farmer's Market in America". Seven indoor buildings and hundreds of outside vendors plus multiple restaurants on site for your luncheon pleasure.

Resorts Casino, Atlantic City, NJ July 21
$70 • A day to do as you please! Visit the beach, boardwalk, eateries or the Casino.

"A Chorus Line", Shawnee-on-the-Delaware - August 15 • $115
Visit Shawnee Inn and Playhouse for an amazing buffet and then enjoy the Award Winning 1975 Broadway Musical "A Chorus Line".

Hudson Valley Wine & Food Festival, Rhinebeck, NY - September 11 • $99
Enjoy over 300 vendors offering a delightful array of wine and food vendors, arts & crafts and food trucks. There are also demonstrations by food chefs and mixologists.

Open to the Public!

"42nd Street", Dutch Apple Theatre, Lancaster - October 16 • $145
Enjoy an amazing Smorgasbord before you see the award-winning musical that ran with 3,500 performances on Broadway.

"White Christmas" Hunterdon Hills Playhouse, Hampton, NY
December 5 • $160
Based on the beloved motion picture, this show will bring the magic of the season to one & all. Includes table served dishes & their famous dessert room.

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World Mission Sunday Mass showcases the Church's many cultures

SCRANTON – Four religious sisters danced down the center aisle of the Cathedral of Saint Peter on Oct. 18 to the sound of drums and an international choir, carrying the gifts of bread and wine to the altar in a joyful procession that brought the sights and sounds of the universal Church to Scranton.

The special procession was part of the Diocese of Scranton's annual celebration of World Mission Sunday.



Four religious sisters joyfully danced down the aisle of the Cathedral of Saint Peter during the Preparation of the Gifts on Oct. 18, 2026, during a Pontifical Mass for World Mission Sunday. (Photo/Mike Melisky)

Dancing to the song, "Yamba, Yamba, Yamba, Yahweh," which originated in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the words translate to "Thank you, thank you, thank you, Lord."

The Most Rev. Joseph C. Bambera, Bishop of Scranton, served as principal celebrant of the 12:15 p.m. Pontifical Mass, greeting the four sisters just outside the sanctuary of the Cathedral at the start of the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

This year marks the 100th anniversary of World Mission Sunday, which was established in 1926 to unite Catholics in prayer and support for missionary work around the world.

Father Sudhir Toppo, Administrator of Most Holy Trinity Parish in Susquehanna, and a native of India, served as homilist for the Mass.

In his homily, Father Toppo reminded those gathered that mission extends beyond priests and religious traveling to distant lands.

"Mission is the love we share, the faith we live and the relationship we build with God's people," he said.

Father Toppo shared a story of a community in his home country that had limited material resources but had a great love in their hearts.

"Their faith was alive. Their families prayed together. They welcomed others with warmth and generosity. Even when life was difficult, they continued to trust in God," he said.

He encouraged Catholics to recognize their shared responsibility to proclaim the Gospel, build unity, and support communities in need.

"All of us are called to be missionary disciples," Father Toppo added. "We cannot proclaim the love of Christ if we live in hatred, discrimination or division … Let us be united in Christ, united in His mission. Let us not allow our differences to divide us. For when we are one in Christ, our lives become a mission of hope for the world."

Bishop Bambera also acknowledged the important contributions of roughly 25 international priests and religious serving the Diocese of Scranton, noting that the Church's missionary story has come full circle.

"We are fortunate enough to be able to keep the faith alive and flourishing in our country and in our diocese in particular because of them," Bishop Bambera noted.

Shannon Ruiz, Diocesan Director of Pontifical Mission Societies, said the annual World Mission Sunday celebration should remind all Catholics that they belong to one global family.

The collection on World Mission Sunday helps to support seminary education, health care, orphanages, and other needs in mission territories around the globe.

"We may be separated by distance, but we're united by one mission," Ruiz said.

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