

Catholic Mission Media Release

60 years of Catholic Mission in Pakistan

Evangelism, inter-religious harmony and the fight against violent extremism are the themes of Mission Year, an initiative of the Catholic Church in Pakistan to coincide with the 60th anniversary of Catholic Mission in the country.

The awareness campaign, to be launched on September 30 in all Catholic dioceses, comes at a difficult time for Pakistani Christians who are often targeted for intimidation, violence and discrimination by some of their countrymen.

Gospel values aligned with the rights, freedoms and obligations of Pakistani Christians is the driver for the new campaign, said Catholic Mission's Director in Pakistan, Father Mario Rodrigues. "We are inseparably Christians and citizens of Pakistan. We want to give to our nation." Fr Mario said.

Fr Mario said the Gospels can illuminate today's Pakistan. "In Mission Year we will be asking ourselves about our role in contributing to building a truly democratic Pakistan, where each individual's rights are respected. We wish to build harmony, peace and the common good, together with all people of goodwill," Fr Mario said.

Fr. Rodrigues lives in Karachi, a city devastated in recent days by several attacks on property, even places of worship. "Attacks on mosques, innocent lives, even the Catholic Church of St. Joseph was hit by vandals a few days ago, the situation is difficult and people are very afraid. We ask the local and federal government to take adequate measures to ensure social peace and fight with determination and effectiveness against terrorist groups who want to destabilize the country." He said.

Last year a law was passed making mandatory the allocation of four seats in the Pakistani Senate for religious minorities, one for each province. Christians are two per cent of Pakistan's religions and Fr. Rodrigues said he is "pleased that the largest religious minority will find parliamentary representation" hoping that "this is the right path to follow in order to have some Christians in institutional seats".

Deputy National Director of Catholic Mission, Mr Peter Gates said "Jesus challenged us all to remake relationships founded on love. As Fr Rodrigues explains there are great challenges in Pakistan to building a peaceful nation. In this special 60th anniversary Mission Year, may Christians in Pakistan help build the nation by living Jesus' mission of love," Peter Gates said.

"We hope and pray for inter-religious harmony in Pakistan, and that we may learn from their example." Mr Gates said.

Catholic Mission (internationally known as the Pontifical Mission Societies) is present in every Catholic diocese around the world, working with the marginalised, building new churches, training Church Leaders and assisting children of all races and religions. We celebrate 60 years in Pakistan as part of God's mission on Earth.



A group of Pakistani Christians who were injured in sectarian attacks in 2010.

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