

January Mission Intention

We pray that Christians may achieve full unity, bearing witness to the universal care of God for the entire human race.



Many members: One Body in Christ...

Country Focus: Israel / Palestine: The Holy Land seeking unity

Israel is the land of the Bible. For nearly 4000 years it has been the backdrop for the story of God's saving plan. Two thousand years ago, the first disciples of Jesus gathered in Jerusalem to receive the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and were joined together in unity as the

Body of Christ - the Church. In that event, Christians of every time and place see themselves as children of the mother church of Jerusalem.

Today, Christians in the Holy Land make up only 2% of the total population of Israel and Palestine. The majority of Christians are Arab speaking Palestinians who represent a multitude of Christian denominations. Since the 1980s, Christian leaders and faithful have been meeting to find common ground and seeking peace together.

They have published common messages and initiatives to promote peace; especially at Christmas and Easter.

Since 1999, thirteen churches of Jerusalem have organized a joint pilgrimage to Bethlehem with pilgrims from all over the world to pray, sing and share scripture at the site of the birth of Jesus.

Jerusalem is considered holy to Christians, Jews and Muslims. This has created an opportunity for members of all three faiths that are descended from Abraham to dialogue and create possibilities to overcome disagreements and conflicts by fostering respect.

The efforts for building unity in the Holy Land are ongoing and deserve our prayer and support.



God's Word for Mission

Promoting Knowledge of Faith

"They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to breaking of the bread and to the prayers. ...All who believed were together and held all things in common." (Acts 2:42-44)

"Christ always gives his Church the gift of unity, but the Church must always pray and work to maintain, reinforce, and perfect the unity that Christ wills for her." (Catechism of Catholic Church, #820-822)

Saints for Mission - St. Paul

Education for Community Life

St. Paul had a dramatic conversion on the way to Damascus. His personal encounter with Christ forced him to question his understanding of the laws and regulations that had shaped his childhood and adult life as a Pharisee.

He is known as the Apostle to the Gentiles because he travelled to many countries surrounding the Mediterranean Sea to share the Gospel. St. Paul established churches in places we read about in the New Testament such as: Rome, Corinth, Ephesus, Philippi and Thessalonica.



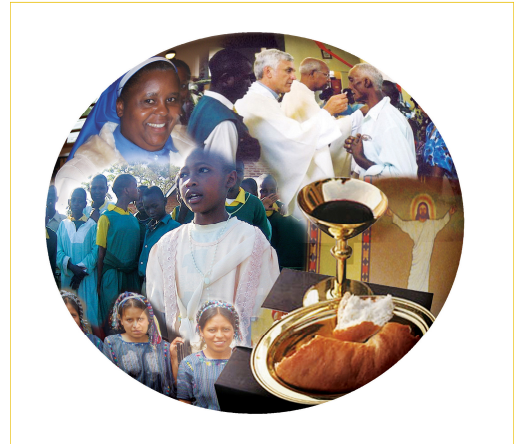
Jan. 25 is the Feast Day of the Conversion of St. Paul

In each place, the Church took on a different look and practice according to the local culture. Paul saw the diversity of the churches as a gift from God. He said the church is many members, but together form the One Body of Christ.

St. Paul is a model for all missionaries and reminds us of our call to seek unity with all Christians. He is the patron of the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis.

Seeking the Common Good

We are created for community. We are called to love God and to love our neighbor as ourselves. Each of us has something to receive and give to make the community stronger. We all have a responsibility to contribute to the good of the whole society - the common good. We add to or subtract from the common good through how we spend our money and time and through the choices we make to build up or tear down others.



Living Mission

The Church has given us four ways, or “marks,” to build Christian unity.

- 1) Sharing and studying God’s Word as it was passed on by the apostles
- 2) Offering constant prayer asking God to change us so that we may actively work for unity
- 3) Celebrating the Eucharist and remembering the New Covenant of love which Jesus revealed in his death and resurrection
- 4) **Building Christian community through shared relationships and sharing goods with the needy**



One of the ways to build community with other Christians is through common service and sharing our goods with the needy. For example, we can share our food with the hungry at local food shelves and give our time to help serve the hungry around the world through an organization like Feed My Starving Children. We can join with other Christians to fix up and build homes for the needy through Habitat for Humanity. Finally, we can join in the cause to end hunger with other Christians through an organization like Bread for the World.

Petitions for Mission

- ✚ Let us pray for unity among all members of the Christian family around the world. Help us to heal division and build on the foundation of our shared faith in Jesus Christ.
- ✚ Let us pray that Jews, Christians and Moslems might find a lasting peace in Israel and Palestine. May Jerusalem truly be a sign of peace and unity to the world.
- ✚ Let us pray that Christians will live out the covenant of love that Jesus called us to. May the Eucharist we share at Mass transform us into the Body and Blood of Christ.
- ✚ Let us pray for an end to intolerance, violence and persecution in the name of religion.

Prayer for Mission

Dear Jesus, you gave us the gift of unity as members of your body. Help us to work together to fulfill your dream that all may be one as you are one with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Amen.