

ISSUE NO. 6 / 2026



MISSIO-AVONA
THE PONTIFICAL MISSION SOCIETIES

SOWER

MAGAZINE 2026



ONE IN CHRIST
UNITED IN
Mission
100 YEARS OF WORLD MISSION SUNDAY



MAGAZINE



MISSION VIDEO



SOWER



We have “SOWER” the title of the digital magazine of the MISSIO-AVONA based on inspiration from the Parable of the Sower (Gospel of Mathew chapter 13). The Sower went to sow the seeds in the field. Likewise, through this magazine we too would like to become the Sowers of the Gospel values of Joy, Love, Hope, Faith, Compassion, Mercy and Inspiration in the minds and hearts of its readers.



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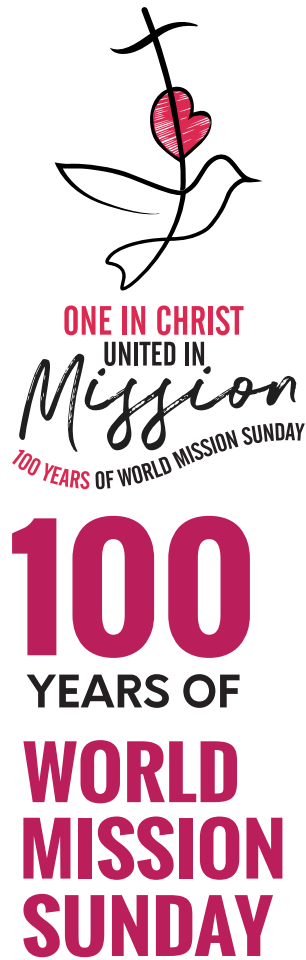
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The centenary of World Mission Sunday in 2026 is a momentous milestone. It testifies to a history of global parish unity and the collective commitment to supporting the mission of the Lord. The theme for this centenary is “One in Christ, united in Mission.” The message is divided into three core pillars:

- One in Christ
- United in Mission
- A Mission to Love

In his message, Pope Leo XIV reminds us to seek this unity in God, who is the ultimate source of communion. He emphasizes that when communion within the Church is breached, reconciliation becomes the path towards restoring unity. The Holy Father’s concludes his message with a prayer, to

Reflecting this global vision, our Apostolic Vicar, H.E. Bishop Aldo Berardi, highlights the importance of “Communion” in his message for World Mission Sunday. He presents communion as the source, form, and scope of the Church’s mission, reminding us that the Church itself is a people gathered into oneness through the Holy Trinity.

The second section of this magazine explores the collaborative mission is lived out in the churches across Apostolic Vicariate of Northern Arabia (AVONA). In these pages, we highlight the reflections and testimonies across various lay ministries, celebrating the faith, dedication and service of our communities. Together, they bear witness to a vibrant migrant Church united in its mission.

Finally, the third section features reports on recent events organized by the Missio-AVONA office, along with updates from the Holy Childhood Society. Highlights include coverage of “San Francesco 800: A Musical Journey of Faith” and the official inauguration of the Holy Childhood Society in Qatar, the AVONA World Mission Cup 2026 and the forthcoming release of 100 Missionary Saints.

The Lord’s mission continues today through our spoken words, written works, and above all, our actions. Ultimately, the mission to love calls each of us to become active missionaries of love.



MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE LEO XIV FOR THE 100th WORLD MISSION DAY 2026



One in Christ, United in Mission

Dear brothers and sisters,

For World Mission Day 2026, which marks the centenary of a celebration established by Pius XI that is very dear to the Church, I have chosen the theme “One in Christ, united in mission.” Following the Jubilee Year, I wish to encourage the whole Church to continue its missionary journey with joy and zeal in the Holy Spirit. This requires hearts united in Christ, reconciled communities and, in everyone, a willingness to cooperate with generosity and trust.

As we reflect on being one in Christ and united in mission, let us allow ourselves to be guided and inspired by divine grace, “to renew in ourselves the fire of our missionary vocation” and advance together in the commitment to evangelization, in this “new missionary age” in the history of the Church (Homily, Jubilee of the Missionary World and of Migrants, 5 October 2025).

1. One in Christ – Missionary disciples united in him and with our brothers and sisters

The mystery of union with Christ lies at the heart of mission. Before his Passion, Jesus prayed to the Father, “that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us” (Jn 17:21). These words reveal Jesus’ deepest desire, as well as the identity of the Church as a community of his disciples. That is, a communion that flows from the Trinity, and continues to be sustained by the Trinity. A communion at the service of fraternity among all human beings and harmony with all creation.

Being a Christian is not primarily about practices or ideas; it is a life in union with Christ, in which we share in his filial relationship with the Father in the Holy Spirit. It means abiding in Christ, like branches on the vine (cf. Jn 15:4), immersed in the life of the Trinity. This union gives rise to mutual communion among believers and is the source of all missionary fruitfulness. Indeed, just as Saint John Paul II taught, “communion represents both the source and the fruit of mission” (Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici*, 32).

In this context, the Church's primary missionary responsibility is to renew and sustain spiritual and fraternal unity among its members. In many situations, we encounter conflicts, polarization, misunderstandings and a lack of mutual trust. When this occurs even within our communities, it undermines our witness. The evangelizing mission that Christ entrusted to his disciples requires, above all, hearts that are reconciled and eager for communion. Consequently, it is important to intensify ecumenical efforts with all Christian Churches, building upon the opportunities arising from the joint celebration of the 1700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea.

Last but not least, being "one in Christ" calls us to keep our gaze fixed on the Lord, so that he may truly be at the center of our lives and communities, the center of every word, action and interpersonal relationship, leading us to say with amazement: "It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me" (Gal 2:20). By constantly listening to his word and through the grace of the Sacraments, it will be possible for us to become living stones in the Church. Today, the Church is called to take up the fundamental themes of the Second Vatican Council and the subsequent Papal Magisterium, in particular that of Pope Francis. In fact, as Saint Paul says, "we do not proclaim ourselves; we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord" (2 Cor 4:5). For this reason, I reiterate the words of Saint Paul VI: "There is no true evangelization if the name, the teaching, the life, the promises, the kingdom and the mystery of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God are not proclaimed" (Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 22). This process of genuine evangelization begins in the heart of every Christian in order to reach all of humanity.

Therefore, the more united we are in Christ, the better able we will be to carry out together the mission that he entrusts to us.

2. United in mission – That the world may believe in Christ the Lord

The unity of disciples is not an end in itself; it is directed towards mission. Jesus states this clearly: "So that the world may believe that you have sent me" (Jn 17:21). It is through the witness of a reconciled, fraternal and united community that the proclamation of the Gospel acquires its full communicative power.

From this perspective, it is worth recalling the motto of Blessed Paolo Manna, "The entire Church for the conversion of the whole world," which succinctly expresses the ideal that inspired the establishment of the Pontifical Missionary Union in 1916. On its 110th anniversary, I convey my gratitude and my blessing for its commitment to inspiring and forming the missionary spirit of priests, consecrated persons and lay faithful, promoting the unity of all evangelizing efforts. In fact, no baptized person is exempt from or indifferent to mission: everyone, each according to their own vocation and condition of life, participates in the great work that Christ has entrusted to his Church. As Pope Francis repeatedly reminded us, proclaiming the Gospel is an action that is always harmonious, communal and synodal.

For this reason, unity in mission means safeguarding and nurturing the spirituality of communion and missionary cooperation. By daily fostering this attitude, divine grace gradually teaches us to see our brothers and sisters through the eyes of faith. We also learn to recognize joyfully the good that the Spirit inspires in each person, to embrace diversity as a treasure, to bear one another's burdens and always to seek the unity that comes from above. Indeed, we all share in one mission in "one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all" (Eph 4:5-6). This spirituality constitutes the daily expression of missionary discipleship. It helps us to recover a universal vision of the Church's evangelizing mission, and to overcome a lack of coordinated efforts and the creation of factions among the followers of the one Lord — such as "I belong to Paul," "I to Apollos" (cf. 1 Cor 1:10-12).

Needless to say, missionary unity should not be understood as uniformity, but rather as the convergence of different charisms for the same purpose, namely to make Christ's love visible and to invite everyone to encounter him. Evangelization is achieved when local communities cooperate with one another and when cultural, spiritual and liturgical differences are fully and harmoniously expressed in the same faith. I therefore encourage all institutions in the Church to strengthen their sense of ecclesial missionary communion and to develop creative and concrete ways of cooperating with one another for and in the mission.

In this regard, I would like to thank the Pontifical Mission Societies for their service to missionary cooperation, which I experienced with gratitude during my ministry in Peru. These Societies — Propagation of the Faith, Holy Childhood, Saint Peter the Apostle, Saint Peter the Apostle and Pontifical Missionary Union — continue to nurture and form missionary awareness for the faithful of all ages, and to promote a network of prayer and charity that connects communities throughout the world. Here, it is worth noting that the founder of the Society of the Propagation of the Faith, Blessed Pauline Marie Jaricot, established the Living Rosary two hundred years ago. Even today it continues to bring together many of the faithful throughout the world to pray for every spiritual and missionary need. It is also worth remembering that, following a proposal from the Society of the Propagation of the Faith, Pius XI established World Mission Day in 1926. The annual offerings collected on this day are distributed by the Society, on behalf of the Pope, to support the various needs of the Church's mission. The four Societies, therefore, as a whole and each in its own specificity, still play a valuable role for the entire Church. They are a living sign of unity and ecclesial missionary communion. I invite everyone to work with them in a spirit of gratitude.

3. Mission to love – Proclaiming, living and sharing God's faithful love

If unity is the condition of mission, love is its essence. The Good News that we are sent to proclaim to the world is not an abstract ideal; it is the Gospel of God's faithful love, which became flesh in the face and life of Jesus Christ.

The mission of the disciples and the Church as a whole is to continue the mission of Christ in the Holy Spirit: a mission born of love, lived in love, and leading to love. In fact, the Lord himself, in his great prayer to the Father before his Passion, after invoking unity among his disciples, concludes: "so that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them" (Jn 17:26). Impelled by the love of Christ, the Apostles then went out to evangelize for Christ (cf. 2 Cor 5:14). In the same way, throughout the centuries, multitudes of Christians — martyrs, confessors and missionaries — have given their lives to make this divine love known to the world. Thus, guided by the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of love, the Church's evangelizing mission will continue until the end of time.

I would like to express my special gratitude to today's *ad gentes* missionaries. Like Saint Francis Xavier, they have left their homeland, their families and all sense of security in order to proclaim the Gospel and bring Christ and his love to places that are often challenging, poor, conflict-ridden or culturally distant. Despite adversity and human limitations, they continue to give themselves joyfully, because they know that Christ himself, and his Gospel, are the greatest treasures we can offer. Through their perseverance, they demonstrate that God's love transcends all barriers. The world still needs these courageous witnesses of Christ, and ecclesial communities still need new missionary vocations. We must always keep them close to our hearts and continually pray to the Father for them. May he grant us the gift of young people and adults who are willing to leave everything behind to follow Christ on the path of evangelization even to the ends of the earth!

Filled with admiration for men and women missionaries, I make a special appeal to the whole Church to join them in the mission of evangelization through the witness of our lives in Christ, through prayer and through our contributions to the missions. As Saint Francis of Assisi said, “Love is not loved,” and we look to him in a special way on the eight hundredth anniversary of his passing to heaven. Let us find inspiration in his desire to live in the love of the Lord and to transmit it to those both near and far, because, as he said, “this love Who hath loved us much is much to be loved” (Saint Bonaventure of Bagnoregio, *The Life of Saint Francis*, chap. IX, 1; *Fonti Francescane*, 1161). Let us also draw inspiration from the zeal of Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus, who declared that she would continue her mission even after death: “I shall desire in heaven the same thing as I do now on earth: to love Jesus and to make him loved” (*Letter 220 to l'Abbé Bellière*, 24 February 1897).

Inspired by these testimonies, let us all commit to contributing to the great mission of evangelization — which is always a work of love — according to our own vocation and the gifts we have received. Your prayers and practical support, particularly on World Mission Day, will be a great help in bringing the Gospel of God's love to everyone, especially the poorest and those most in need. Every gift, no matter how small, becomes a meaningful act of missionary communion. I renew my heartfelt gratitude “for everything you will do to help me help missionaries throughout the world” (Video Message for World Mission Day 2025, 19 October 2025).

To foster spiritual communion, I give you my blessing with this simple prayer:

Holy Father, make us one in Christ, rooted in his love that unites and renews. May all members of the Church be united in mission, docile to the Holy Spirit, courageous in bearing witness to the Gospel, proclaiming and daily embodying your faithful love for all creatures.

Bless all missionary men and women, support them in their efforts, and watch over them in hope!

Mary, Queen of Missions, accompany our work of evangelization in every corner of the earth: make us instruments of peace, and grant that the whole world may recognize in Christ the light that saves. Amen.

From the Vatican, 25 January 2026, Third Sunday in Ordinary Time, Feast of the Conversion of Saint Paul

Pope Leo XIV



النيابة الرسولية لشمال شبه الجزيرة العربية
APOSTOLIC VICARIATE OF NORTHERN ARABIA
BAHRAIN . KUWAIT . QATAR . SAUDI ARABIA

Message from the Apostolic Vicar of Northern Arabia
for World Mission Sunday — October 18, 2026

My dear brothers and sisters,

Let me begin with the heart of the matter. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, loved us enough to die for our sins and was raised that we might live forever in Him (cf. 1 Cor 15:3-4; Rom 5:8). Every missionary, every word of this message, and every support to the missions around the world exist only to make that one fact known and loved. This is the Gospel we are sent to proclaim.

I invite you to picture a young missionary priest in Peru, dust on his shoes, sitting with a family in a home and sharing God's love. It might seem like a small and insignificant mission, especially compared to the enormous need to spread the Gospel globally. That priest is now Pope Leo XIV, and for this centenary of World Mission Sunday, he has given the theme "*One in Christ, United in Mission*." The words echo Christ's own prayer the night before He died: "*that they may all be one... so that the world may believe*" (cf. Jn 17:20-21).

Scripture never separates our unity from our mission. We are one Body, each of us members of it (cf. 1 Cor 12:12, 27), no longer Jew or Greek, slave or free, but all one in Christ Jesus (cf. Gal 3:28). And that Body does not exist for itself: "we are ambassadors for Christ" (cf. 2 Cor 5:20), sent out with a real message for real people. Then, the Fathers of the Church knew this centuries before us. St. Irenaeus marveled that the Church, though "dispersed throughout the whole world," believed and preached "as if she had but one soul."¹ St. Cyprian put it more bluntly still: "he can no longer have God for his Father, who has not the Church for his mother."² And St. John Chrysostom left us a phrase our own synodal age has rediscovered: "Synod is the name of the Church."³ Unity was never optional. It is what makes us recognizable as Christ's own.

The International Theological Commission said this plainly in its 2018 document on synodality: communion is "the source, the form, and the scope" of the Church's mission, because the Church herself is a people gathered into one out of the Trinity. We are sent because we are first united; we are united so that we can be sent.⁴ That sending of missionaries is not abstract. Your gift on World Mission Sunday, October 18th, becomes the school that forms the next missionary priest, the small Church where the Eucharist is offered for the first time in a village that has waited generations for it. In an average year, your generosity supports over 900 such projects worldwide.

So, I invite you to come to Mass. Give what you can, generously. Pray for a missionary by name. In doing so, you are not merely donating—you are living the very unity Christ prayed for, so that the world may believe.

With my prayers and deep gratitude for your generosity,

✠ Bishop Aldo BERARDI, O.S.S.T.
Apostolic Vicar of Northern Arabia



¹ cf. St. Irenaeus of Lyons, *Against Heresies*, 1.10.2

² cf. St. Cyprian of Carthage, *On the Unity of the Catholic Church*, ch. 6.

³ cf. St. John Chrysostom, cited in International Theological Commission, *Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church* (2018), no. 43, and in Pope Francis, *Address for the 50th Anniversary of the Institution of the Synod of Bishops* (17 October 2015).

⁴ cf. International Theological Commission, *Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church* (2018), no. 43, cf. no. 15, and *Lumen Gentium*, no. 4.

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Consecration to the
Sacred Heart of Jesus
Of the Apostolic Vicariate of
Northern Arabia



BAHRAIN - KUWAIT-QATAR-SAUDI ARABIA



ALDO BERARDI

By the grace of God and the favour of the Apostolic See
APOSTOLIC VICAR OF NORTHERN ARABIA
(Bahrain-Kuwait-Qatar-Saudi Arabia)

SOLEMN ACT OF
Consecration to the Sacred Heart of Jesus
of the Apostolic Vicariate of Northern Arabia



O most Sacred Heart of Jesus, *burning furnace of charity and inexhaustible source of mercy*, we, the shepherds and faithful of the Apostolic Vicariate of Northern Arabia, gathered as one people before Your throne of grace, prostrate ourselves in humble adoration and filial love.

Moved by a sincere desire to belong entirely to You, and trusting wholly in Your merciful love, we freely and solemnly *consecrate and entrust this entire Vicariate* — its clergy and religious, its faithful families, its children and youth, its sick and suffering, its poor and abandoned — to Your Most Sacred Heart.

May You reign in every parish and community, in every home and heart, in every school and institution within these lands. Let Your flame of love purify what is sinful, strengthen what is weak, restore what has strayed, and draw all souls ever closer to the Father through the Spirit of holiness.

We consecrate to You our joys and our sorrows, our labors and our rest, our apostolic endeavors and our frailties. Receive them all as a humble offering, and through the merits of Your Precious Blood, transform this Vicariate into a living monument of Your love and mercy.

Through the intercession of the Immaculate Heart of Mary—*Our Lady of Arabia*—Queen of Peace and Mother of the Church, we beg You to protect us from all harm, to bless our mission abundantly, and to grant us the grace of final perseverance, so that one day all the souls of this Vicariate may praise and glorify You in eternal beatitude.



*Sacred Heart of Jesus, we trust in You.
Sacred Heart of Jesus, have mercy on us.
Sacred Heart of Jesus, Thy Kingdom come.*



✠ **Bishop Aldo Berardi, O.S.S.T.**
Apostolic Vicar for Northern Arabia



On the 12th of June in the year of our Lord, 2026
the Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus
Vicarial Shrine of the Sacred Heart of Jesus
Apostolic Vicariate of Northern Arabia
Manama, Kingdom of Bahrain



His Holiness Pope Leo XIV received today, Thursday, September 3, 2026, the members of the Conference of Latin Bishops of the Arab Regions, delivering a powerful message to the Churches living amid conflict, migration, and tensions. Among the bishops present was H.E. Bishop Aldo Berardi, Apostolic Vicar of Northern Arabia.

The Holy Father said: “Do not be afraid because you are few in number. The contribution of the Church is not measured by numbers, structures, or resources, but by fidelity to the Gospel.”

The Pope recalled the priests, religious men and women, and faithful who gave their lives in Iraq, Syria, and Yemen, stressing that their faithfulness remains a light and a call not to surrender to fear or despair.

Pope Leo XIV urged the bishops to remain close to their people and to give particular care to families, young people, and migrants in the Gulf countries. He also encouraged them to strengthen unity and dialogue with Muslims and with the various religious traditions.

His Holiness emphasized that the mission of the Church “is not merely to preserve the Christian presence, but to make Christ present.” He added: “Be a voice for truth, justice, and peace; be men of prayer, shepherds close to your people, builders of reconciliation, and witnesses of mercy.”

MISSION SUNDAY APPEAL



So, I invite you to come to Mass. Give what you can. generously. Pray for a missionary by name. In doing so, you are not merely donating you are living the very unity Christ prayed for, so that the world may believe.

PART 2

UNITED IN MISSION



SERVING IN THE CHURCH

A photograph of a family in a church. A man and a woman are looking at a book together, while a young girl looks up at them. In the background, there is a large crucifix and stained glass windows.

PASSING ON THE FAITH



Mr. Rogy Joseph
Catechism Coordinator, Bahrain

A Sacred Tradition of Love, Truth, and Community

“For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.” (Romans 10:10)

The greatest gift we can receive in this life is the knowledge of God’s unconditional love through Jesus Christ. This gift, however, is not meant to be kept hidden; it is a sacred flame handed down from generation to generation. Passing on the faith is at the heart of the Christian tradition. It is the living transmission of God’s truth, love, and grace across generations, ensuring that the light of Christ continues to shine in a changing world.

The Beauty of Sacred Tradition

“Faith is a light that illuminates our steps through every generation.”

In our modern world, the word “tradition” is sometimes misunderstood as rigid rules or

outdated customs. In the life of the Church, however, Sacred Tradition is living and dynamic. It reflects the continuing guidance of the Holy Spirit to the community of believers. When we pass on the faith, we do more than teach history or morals; we invite others into a profound, personal relationship with the living God.

Acknowledging Our Shared Responsibility

The First Educators: Parents

Parents are the foundation of faith formation. The home is the “Domestic Church” where daily prayer, forgiveness, and loving actions help children understand what God’s love looks like in everyday life.

The faith journey begins around the kitchen table, in evening prayers before sleep, and in moments of quiet grace during family struggles. Children learn more from what they see than from what they are

told. When parents practice their faith authentically, showing kindness, seeking reconciliation, and trusting God in difficult times — they plant seeds that can bear fruit throughout their children's lives. St. John Paul II often reminded families of their sacred calling, emphasizing that the family is the first place where a person receives the formative experiences of love and faith.

The December Flame: Handing on the Bible and the Cross

“Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it.” (Proverbs 22:6)

The act of handing on faith is rooted in the New Testament, echoing St. Paul's words, “For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you...” (1 Corinthians 11:23). These words emphasise the continuity of faith, received and passed on from one generation to the next.

Every year during the winter season, since 2009, I have witnessed a profoundly solemn and beautiful ceremony in our church as both a parent and a catechist: the Handing on of the Faith to our seventh-grade students. During this cherished milestone, parents lovingly hand over the family Bible and the crucifix to their growing children, symbolizing the passing on of light, heritage, and divine truth.

This tender milestone reminds us that faith is not merely learned from books, it is also nurtured

through the love and example of the parents. In that holy hour, the Domestic Church expands into the wider family of God, helping to ensure that the faith is carried forward through the years.

Catechists and Priests: Walking Alongside Families

While parents plant and nurture the first seeds of faith, catechists and priests provide formation, community and sacramental grace. Catechists dedicate their time and talents to explaining the beauty of the Gospel in classrooms and parish halls. They answer difficult questions, model Christian joy, and create welcoming environments where young people feel safe to grow spiritually.

Priests stand at the center of this ecosystem. Through the celebration of the Eucharist, the source and summit of Christian life, the Sacrament of Reconciliation and the preaching of the Word, they strengthen the faithful and remind them that no one walks the journey of faith alone.

Living the Faith Today

Passing on the faith is not merely a duty rooted in tradition; it is an urgent calling today. In a world often distracted by noise, materialism, and isolation, the Gospel offers peace, purpose, and eternal hope.

God bless us all!



The Mission Logo:



Cross: Represents Faith and our connection with God, the Father.

Heart: Represents Jesus, the Son, connecting us through God's love as one family.

Dove: Represents the Holy Spirit, carrying a message of hope, peace and faith.

Together, the cross, the heart and the dove represents the **Holy Trinity** – the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit – **united as one**. The image also reflects the connection between God and humanity, brought together through faith and love.

“One in Christ united in mission” - This Theme, chosen by Pope Leo XIV celebrates **hope, unity** and our shared **call to mission**.

This year marks the 100th Anniversary of the World Mission Sunday: A hundred years, Pope Pius XI called the whole Church to review its missionary commitment, champion local leadership, and proclaim the Gospel through both word and compassionate service.

United in the **MISSION of FAITH FORMATION**



Introduction: A Foundation Rooted in Christ

Born into a devout Catholic family with parents who were both educators, I developed a desire to teach from an early age. Though my professional career initially took a different path, my soul remained anchored in my encounter with Jesus and His unconditional love. My journey as a catechist at the Minor Basilica Our Lady of Arabia, Ahmadi- Kuwait began with a deep, personal desire to offer a lifelong “thank you” to Jesus for His abundant blessings. This desire transformed my natural inclination to teach into a spiritual calling to labour in the Lord’s vineyard.

The Crucible of Faith: A Witness to Miracles

My commitment to the Church’s mission stems from a life-changing experience of God’s grace and protection fifteen years ago. While on vacation in London, my four-year-old daughter suddenly in the large Sunday crowds on the Millennium Bridge. In that moment of helplessness and distress, I fell to my knees in the middle of the road, surrendered



Mrs. Mary D’souza
Catechist, Ahmadi, Kuwait

everything to God, and prayed with all my heart: “Jesus, cover her with Your Most Precious Blood.”

By God’s immense grace, she was found safe an hour later at the train station across the bridge, just moments before boarding a train alone. In that moment, I knew that a lifetime of service would never fully express my gratitude to Jesus and Our Lady of Arabia. This profound experience drew me closer to Christ and strengthened my desire to share His mighty deeds, protection and unconditional love with others.

Living the Great Commission as a Catechist

As a catechist, my mission is rooted in the Great Commission (Matthew 28:16-20), in which Jesus commands His disciples to make disciples of all nations, and teach them to obey everything He

commanded. In an age dominated by social media and other superficial connections, young minds may struggle with feelings of isolation or not being “enough.” My mission is to introduce children to Jesus as their faithful and unfailing, forever friend in whom alone they can find lasting love and acceptance.

Serving within our Synodal Church, my contribution to the parish mission is a collaborative, and prayerful endeavour. Together, under the mantle of Our Lady of Arabia, we Catechists pray, plan, and prepare each week to ensure that the Catholic faith, Scripture, and Sacred Tradition are faithfully passed on to the next generation.

Cultivating Kingdom Values for the Future

My contribution to the church mission includes preparing children for the Sacraments of First Holy Communion and Confirmation. My core objective is to help them develop a personal relationship with the Holy Trinity and understand they are loved just “as they are.”

Through teaching and personal example, I seek to instil Christ’s values in them, especially the two greatest commandments: to love God with all our heart, mind and soul, and to love our neighbour as ourselves. I also encourage them to remain open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. I strive to prepare these children for their life journeys so that, when they face the challenges of the world, they may remain rooted in faith, guided by the Holy Spirit and committed to building a better world shaped by the values of God’s Kingdom. ■





ONE in CHRIST, UNITED in MISSION



Mr. Neil Gois
Catechism coordinator, Qatar

Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ (1 Cor 12:12)

Every year, when the Consolidated Catechism Report comes together, I am struck by something simple: 10 different Catechism groups, each serving a different language or with their own catechists, classes and rhythms — yet united in one mission and one Church. English, Tagalog, Arabic, Hispanic, French, Italian, Luso-Brazilian, Syro-Malabar, Syro-Malankara and other groups appear side by side in the same document, because the faith they pass on transcends language.

I see the same unity when children prepare for First Holy Communion, or when candidates prepare for Confirmation. Behind every name on those lists is a catechist who shows up on a Friday or Saturday, a parent who drove a child to class, a priest who prepares the liturgy. None of us does this work alone, and the mission belongs to all of us. It is one mission, carried forward by many hands.

Even something as simple as helping a child learn about the life of a saint — checking a date, correcting a fact, or ensuring that the story is told accurately — is part of this same mission: forming people who will one day carry Gospel forward and proclaim it themselves.

My experience in this ministry has taught me that unity in Christ is not an abstract idea. It is lived in a catechism classroom, reflected in a report, and witnessed when a child receives Jesus for the first time, receives Confirmation or learns about a saint or martyr. We are one, not because we are the same, but because we serve the same Lord and share in the mission entrusted to His Church.

FAITHFUL SERVICE IN THE ALTAR SERVER MINISTRY



I vividly recall the day when, just after Holy Mass, our beloved former parish priest of Our Lady of the Visitation Church, Awali, Bahrain, Fr Roen Encabo, approached my husband, Prakash, and me for a conversation. He explained that Br Ronald was stepping down from the altar server ministry and asked whether we would be willing to take it over. Our names had been kindly recommended by Sis Bella and Br Peter Baptista. Sis Bella was a wonderful soul. May she rest in the everlasting peace of Christ. At first, we were taken by surprise. This was not a ministry we had ever imagined ourselves leading, even though both our children were active altar servers. Yet, we recognized this as a call, and we could not say no. Thus, our journey began around 2013.

What began with hesitation grew into thirteen years of faithful service. Coordinating altar servers was not without challenges. Meetings were held at noon, a time when few could commit. Many children lacked transport, and our parish did not have adequate spaces for rehearsals before High Masses. Practices were sometimes conducted in difficult conditions, including sandstorms, dense fog, the summer heat and the winter cold.

Despite these obstacles, we persevered. Our purpose was never convenience, but service: to

Mrs. Laveena

Ex- Coordinator (Bahrain)

God and to the community. By guiding children at the altar, we helped create opportunities for them to encounter Christ in a profound way. These efforts planted seeds of faith that continue to grow in the lives of those we mentored. Even today, some parents share during gatherings how this ministry helped shape their children's lives. This ministry was marked by love, sacrifice, and resilience. It was not about recognition, but about stepping forward where help was needed and ensuring that the liturgy was celebrated with reverence and joy. As Scripture reminds us, "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord" (Colossians 3:23). The altar server ministry entrusted to us became a living testimony to this truth. Our years of service have enriched parish life and strengthened the mission of our community of faith.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude, especially to Rev. Fr Saji and Rev. Fr Marcus, as well as to everyone who supported this ministry. We pray that the Lord will inspire others to serve Him with joy and devotion.



MASTER OF CEREMONY A SERVANT AT THE ALTAR: UNITED IN CHRIST



When I first joined the altar server ministry as a child, I took my first hesitant steps into the sanctuary with only a small seed of faith. Standing close to the altar, I became more aware of the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist. In that presence, I felt a quiet yet persistent calling in my heart—an invitation to love and serve Christ deeply. That encounter transformed my perspective, making my service a sacred passion rather than a simple duty.

As my devotion grew, so did my desire to serve with greater reverence. Under the patient guidance and mentorship of Fr. Nicolson, our First Master of Ceremonies, I learned that every detail of the liturgy is an act of love offered to God. Responding to this calling led me from being a young altar server to serving as Second Master of Ceremonies to Bishop Aldo. This journey reminds me how our shared devotion keeps us United in Christ.

To all our young altar servers: listen closely to the voice of God in your hearts. You are never too young to answer His calling and become a powerful witness to His love. Trust Him completely, let your love for the Eucharist anchor your life, and let your service inspire others to follow Him.

In Christ's love and service.

Gavin Joswa Crasta
*Second Master of Ceremonies,
Apostolic Vicariate of Northern Arabia*

SINGING THE GLORIES OF THE LORD:

A JOURNEY OF FAITH AND SERVICE



One Song: United in Voice to Make Melody for the Lord

To sing for the Lord is one of the greatest blessings He has entrusted to us. For more than thirty-five years, sacred music has been a way of prayer, worship, and service—a journey that began with a young girl's desire to know God and has grown into a lifelong commitment to serving Him and His people.

A Journey Rooted in Faith

My journey began in 1988 in the Philippines, with children's catechism classes at a local parish. As my faith grew, so did involvement in parish life, eventually leading to the church choir. It was there that singing became more than music—it became a way to pray, serve, and bring people closer to God.



Miss Mary Grace Reyes
*Episcopal Choir Coordinator,
Bahrain*

After moving to Bahrain, the ministry continued through service at Sacred Heart Church and through the El Shaddai Bahrain Chapter. From 2016 to 2023, I served as Filipino Music Ministry Coordinator and later as Music Ministry Coordinator from 2022 to 2025.

A deeply humbling moment came in November 2022, when I was blessed to serve as the Psalmist during the Papal Mass celebrated by His Holiness Pope Francis during his historic Apostolic Journey to the Kingdom of Bahrain. Proclaiming the Responsorial Psalm before thousands of faithful was a profound reminder that every gift is entrusted to us for the service of God.

Serving Through the Episcopal Choir

In March 2024, a new chapter of service began when I joined the Episcopal Choir at the Cathedral of Our Lady of Arabia, where I serve as Choir Coordinator.

The choir brings together 30 to 50 members from different nationalities and communities across Bahrain. One of the greatest blessings of this ministry is witnessing people from diverse cultures and backgrounds come together during liturgical celebrations to sing for the Lord. Though we may speak different languages and come from different countries, our voices become one in worship. This unity beautifully reflects the universality of the Church and reminds us that faith can bring people together beyond culture and nationality. The ministry involves coordinating rehearsals, selecting hymns, managing schedules and organising liturgical

assignments. Beyond these responsibilities, however, lies a greater call: to serve with humility, unity and love.

A Life of Faith and Service

Looking back, I realise that this journey is not about accomplishments but about God's faithfulness. From the early days of catechism and parish choir ministry to serving in the Cathedral, every chapter has been an opportunity to grow in faith and service.

Serving through sacred music is more than singing. It is about offering our time, talents, and voices to God and helping others encounter Him through prayer and worship. May every song we sing be a prayer, every service we offer an act of love, and every voice we lift bring glory to God. ■



Extra-ordinary HOLY COMMUNION MINISTRY

Blessed Be the Name of the Lord God Almighty

My name is Clito Pereira, and I am 61 years old. I serve as an Extraordinary Eucharist Minister for Holy Communion (EMHC) both at Our Lady of the Visitation Church, Awali, and the Cathedral of Our Lady of Arabia, Bahrain.

It gives me an immense joy to share my experience of serving in this ministry. My family regularly participated in the Eucharistic celebrations at both churches. Our two children were also actively involved in parish life, then serving as Altar Servers and Lectors.

In 2013, Rev. Fr Felicio Deniz gave me the



Mr. Clito Pereira
EMHC-Awali, Bahrain.

opportunity to serve as an Extraordinary Eucharist Minister of Holy Communion, through Dr. Ronald, the coordinator of the Eucharistic Ministry. This ministry soon became very close to my heart, and I began learning things beyond my expectations. As 2 Corinthians 12:9 reminds us, God's grace is sufficient for us. Our faith grew, and we experienced many blessings. I received a good job, our children completed their MBBS degrees at medical college, and we were blessed with a house.

In 2022, Rev. Fr. Saji Thomas appointed me coordinator of the Eucharistic Ministry. That same year, the visit of our Holy Father, Pope Francis, to

Bahrain was announced, and a special Eucharistic celebration was planned at Isa Town Stadium. It was an exciting and joyful time for us. Inspired by the words of Jesus in John 15:5, “I am the vine; you are the branches,” we came together as one community of the Cathedral, one in Christ and united in mission, to organise this great celebration of the Papal Mass. We had never imagined that we would have the opportunity to serve at such

a solemn and sacred gathering. Truly, we were blessed with a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to serve at the Papal Mass.

I thank Almighty God for choosing me to serve as an Eucharistic Minister, both in our community and in His mission.



I am an **USHER**: United in Service to the Church

My name is Francisco Rodrigues, and I have been working in Bahrain for the past 41 years as a driver for a Bahraini family.

My work keeps me very busy throughout the week, leaving me with little time to attend church or participate in parish activities. However, whenever I have a day off and the opportunity to do so, I make it a point to attend Holy Mass.

Coming to church is very special to me. When I attend Mass, I do not want simply to participate and go home. I feel a desire in my heart to support the Church community in whatever small way I can. That is why I serve as an usher whenever I am able to.

Serving as an usher may seem like a small responsibility, but it brings me great happiness. I feel that I am contributing to the life of the Church and supporting the community. I enjoy welcoming people, assisting them and being part of the celebration of Holy Mass.

Although my day off is precious to me, I find joy in spending some of that time with the Church community. It brings me peace and fulfilment. Despite my many responsibilities at work, I know that I can still offer my time and service to God and His people.

*Mr. Francis Rodrigues
Cathedral, Awali Bahrain*

I believe many people face similar challenges. They may work long hours or have family and other responsibilities. Sometimes, we may think, “I don’t have enough time to serve.” I understand this feeling because I experience it myself. However, my experience has taught me that even a little time, offered with a willing heart, can make a difference.

If you feel called to serve, look for an opportunity that suits your circumstances. It does not have to involve something big. Even helping for a short time, welcoming someone, assisting during Mass or simply being present to support the community can be meaningful.

I share my experience in the hope that it will encourage others facing similar challenges. We may not have much time, but we can make good use of the time God gives us. Every act of service, however small, can become a meaningful offering to Him. ■

One in **Christ**. United in **Mission**.



Michael Mascarenhas

Catholic Church of our Lady of the Rosary – Qatar

By serving in Church ministries, communities, and movements we are all called to participate in the mission of Christ by using our gifts, time, and abilities for the good of others. Service is not merely a responsibility; it is a privilege and an invitation to grow closer to our Lord. Though we come from different countries, cultures and backgrounds, we are united in Christ through our service.

The Church is not merely a place where we gather to attend Holy Mass. We come together as a community of believers, called to live out Christ's teachings and make Him present in the life of the Church through our service. Each of us has a role to play. Some serve through liturgical ministries, while others contribute through teaching, music, charity or youth ministries. Every form of service is valuable when offered with love and humility.

When we serve together, our individual gifts become part of a greater purpose. Our different talents, experiences, and journeys are woven together by God into one beautiful mission — to glorify Him and build His Kingdom. Serving in our ministries reminds us that our mission is not about personal achievements or recognition, but about allowing Christ to work through us unitedly as members of His Body.

Our Lord is our greatest example of service to humanity. He welcomed the poor, comforted the suffering, forgave sinners, and cared for those who were forgotten. At the Last Supper, He washed the feet of His disciples, giving them a powerful example of humble service. He showed us that leadership in the Church is not about position or authority, but about love, sacrifice, and a willingness to serve.

Through service, Christ also transforms us from within. He gently shapes our hearts, teaching us humility, patience, compassion, and selfless love. As we give of ourselves for others, we discover that ministry is also a journey of grace, through which God renews us and draws us closer to His heart.

The blessings we receive through serving are not meant to remain within the Church alone. The Eucharist sends us forth to bring Christ into our homes, workplaces, and communities. An encounter with Christ should inspire us to love, forgive, help, and serve others.

May we continue to serve with humility and joyful hearts, strengthening our commitment through faith and allowing ourselves to be inspired by love. Let us always remember that we do not walk this mission alone. We are one Body in Christ, united in His love and called to carry His light to everyone we meet. ■

One in **Christ**. United in **Mission**.

From 1975 to 2016, I was a parishioner of the Church of Our Lady of Arabia, Ahmadi, Kuwait, which has since been elevated to a Minor Basilica. It was a privilege and a blessing to serve the parish community for over 40 years.

I began serving as a catechist in 1976, teaching children in Fahaheel. I later joined the Legion of Mary and was honored to serve as its first president. I was blessed to also serve as a lector and an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion, as well as a member of the Padre Pio Choir. Through these ministries, I was able to share God's love and contribute to the Church's mission of evangelisation.

In the 1970s, catechists faced the challenge of teaching children in the basement of a building. Under the initial guidance of our then parish priest, Fr Cayetano Iriate, we continued this work and later moved our classes into the church, where all the classes were held simultaneously. Eventually, classes moved to the present Catechism Block. Throughout these changes, we remained committed to passing on our faith and helping children grow in their relationship with Jesus.

Through the Legion of Mary, we reached out to the sick, prisoners, and less fortunate. We visited them in hospitals and prisons, praying with them and sometimes organizing events for them.

In the 1980s, we organized picnics for domestic workers, bringing them joy through simple outings. During one of my visits at Al-Adan hospital in the



Patrick J. P. Dsouza
*Goa, India /Formerly of
Kuwait*

1990s, I met an elderly man who did not want to be visited by anyone from the Church. Yet, through God's grace and the intercession of Our Lady of Arabia, I felt called to reach out to him. I continued visiting him and keeping in touch.

Months later, during one of my visits, he confided that he had not been to confession for many years but now wished to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Witnessing those who were lost, find the courage to come back was both a blessing and a reminder that everything is possible only when we remain united in Christ and faithful to our mission.

Throughout my journey, I also received many blessings in my professional life. I overcame challenges and eventually rose to management level. Today, in my retirement in Goa, one of my greatest joys is seeing my daughter, son-in-law and grandchildren actively serving in this very parish. Seeing two more generations carry forward this legacy of faith and service, which is so close to my heart, fills me with profound gratitude and fulfilment. ■



United in the Mission: Prayer and Action

“But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me has not been in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them—though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me”. (1 Cor. 15:10)

As I reflect on my experiences of serving in the mission of the Church, I would like to begin with these words of St Paul, for I am deeply aware of my weaknesses and unworthiness to serve in His vineyard. I spent nearly thirty years of my life as merely a Sunday churchgoer, but today I find joy in being part of Christ’s mission in His vineyard. I consider this journey a call from God and an expression of His mercy and love. My journey of serving in the Church has been deeply enriching and faith-filled. It has taught me that being a Christian is not merely about believing in Christ, but about becoming one with Him and allowing His love to be reflected in my life and service.



As the coordinator of CHARIS (Charismatic Prayer Groups) in Kuwait, I experience the joy and responsibility of bringing people together in prayer, praise and fellowship. Through prayer meetings, the sharing of the Word of God and various spiritual activities, I have witnessed how the Holy Spirit touches and transforms lives. This ministry has also transformed me personally, teaching me to depend more deeply on God, to listen to His voice and to serve with humility, patience and dedication.



Mr. Aby Punnoose
*Minor Basilica of Our Lady
of Arabia*



“ So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.”
James 2:14-17

These words from the Letter of St James inspired me to join POSA (Poor of St Antony), one of the Charity Committees in our Church. As a member of POSA I have learned that Christ is present especially in those who are in need. My involvement in POSA’s activities has reminded me that Christian faith must be expressed through love and service. It has also given me the opportunity to experience the joy of sharing, compassion and solidarity with others.

For me, being ‘one with Christ’ means loving as He loved, serving as He served, forgiving as He forgave and reaching out to those who need His love. I see my role in the Charismatic Prayer Group, my service as a Catechist, my involvement in charitable activities and communication ministry, and every other responsibility in the Church as different expressions of the same mission: to know Christ, to love Christ, to serve Christ and to make His love known to others.

These experiences have helped me understand that mission is not confined to the Church or to a particular ministry. It is a way of life.



Together for the **Mission of Christ:** A Story of a MISSIONARY and HIS BAG

Fr. Marcus Fernandes OFM Cap.

I was ordained on 26 January 2011 in Goa, India in a Capuchin Friar Minor Order. In 2012, I received a call to serve as an active missionary in Chisda, Dadra and Nagar Haveli. However, this initial mission did not succeed. Within a year, in 2013, I received another call through my Provincial, Fr. Dinesh Mendonca, from the General Curia in Rome, inviting me to join the missions in Northern Mexico. I readily accepted the calling. Thus began my journey as a missionary—leaving behind my homeland for the Gospel.

From September to the first week of December 2014, I attended a mission formation program in Brussels, Belgium. This formation also took me to other countries, including France, Germany, and Italy. While in Koln, Germany, I purchased a simple sling bag for €10. At the Portiuncula in Assisi, Italy, I received my missionary mandate to serve in the missions, along with a San Damiano Cross. Since 2014, this bag has been my constant companion, accompanying me faithfully throughout my missionary journey.

Many people are curious about it. They often ask, “Father, what do you have in that bag?” Whether in the scorching deserts, the deep ranchos, or the bustling cities of Mexico, my bag carried a small missal, a Mass kit, a stole, holy water, and holy oils. It also held an apple, a biscuit, and a bottle of water to sustain me throughout the day. Later, when I was in Rome, Italy, this same bag accompanied me to the classrooms of the Pontifical University of Antonianum.

Now, the bag has reached the deserts of the Arab world. I arrived in Bahrain on November 14, 2023 and here too, it continues to arouse curiosity. Even the Bishop was curious about what it contained! I have now added candies to the bag, bringing joy to both elders and children who receive them.

My mission bag is wearing out, and many people have offered to replace it. However, I intend to have it repaired so that it can continue the mission with me. We are united in a common purpose to serve Christ and proclaim His Gospel. My prayer is simple: “God, allow me to enter your Kingdom with my bag.”

PART 3



A HEARTFELT THANK YOU



Cathedral of Our Lady of Arabia
Kingdom of Bahrain

My sincere gratitude to all the
Delegates, Performers, Musicians, Choir members,
Organizers, Volunteers, and Everyone
who joined us for

San Francesco 800 - A Musical Journey of Faith.

Your presence, participation, and generous support
made this celebration a truly beautiful and
memorable journey of faith, music,
fraternity, and peace.

**May the spirit of St. Francis of Assisi
continue to inspire us to live his message:
PACE E BENE — Peace and Good!**

Thank you for being part of this special
celebration and for making it a joyful experience
for our community.

With prayerful gratitude and blessings,



The Cathedral of Our Lady of Arabia
Awali, Kingdom of Bahrain

H.E. Bishop Aldo Berardi, O.S.S.T.
Apostolic Vicar of Northern Arabia



MESSAGE

H.E. Bishop Aldo Berardi, O.S.S.T.
Apostolic Vicar of Northern Arabia

On the celebration of **San Francesco 800:**
MUSICAL NIGHT

Your Excellency Dr. Shaikh Abdullah bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Chairman of the King Hamad Global Center for Coexistence and Tolerance, Your Excellencies, distinguished guests, reverend clergy, beloved sisters-nuns, dear brothers and sisters,

Peace be upon you. Pax et bonum—the greeting of St. Francis.

First, allow me to express our deepest gratitude to His Majesty the King for the gracious hospitality of the Kingdom of Bahrain. Through his leadership, people of different faiths live and worship with dignity, and celebrations such as this can take place freely and joyfully. We ask you, Your Excellency, Dr. Shaikh Abdullah, to convey our sincere thanks and prayerful good wishes to His Majesty.

- **His Excellency, Hon. Andrea CATALANO, Italian Ambassador,**
- **Rev. Fr. Michael FERNANDES, Custos of the Capuchins for the Gulf Region,**
- **His Excellency, Hon. Gines GALLAGA, Ambassador of the Republic of the Philippines**
- **His Excellency, Hon. Eric GIRAUD-TELME, French Ambassador, and his wife**
- **His Excellency, Hon. CHOI Byoung-sun, Korean Ambassador, and his wife**
- **His Excellency, Hon. Ali Abdulla AL ARADI, Deputy Chairman, KHGC**
- **Her Excellency, Hon. Muneera Nofal AL DOSERI, Executive Director, KHGC**
- **Rev. Rob JONES, Deacon of the St. Christopher's Cathedral, and his wife**

Other distinguished guests who grace us with their presence, and of course, all of you present here tonight, who I believe are eager to listen to our Musical Night.

Certainly, we extend our sincerest gratitude to Father Marcus for orchestrating this evening, to our choirs, band members, performers, silent volunteers who gave their known and unknown contributions, and everyone involved in making this event possible.

Eight hundred years ago, St. Francis passed from this world singing. We call this his Transitus. He sought

God with his whole heart, and he did everything in praise of his Creator.

I speak tonight as a Christian and as a shepherd of my community, so let me say plainly where our conviction on peace comes from. We believe peace is first a gift from God, before it is a human achievement. Our Lord Jesus Christ said, “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you” (Jn 14:27). Francis received that gift freely—and freely gave it away. Whomever he met, he greeted with the words, “The Lord give you peace.”

His peace was never naïve. In an age of war, he crossed lines of conflict to meet the Sultan of Egypt, unarmed and respectful, and he was received with courtesy, as His Majesty, the King, and our Muslim brothers have received us here in Bahrain. Francis believed that a person can hold firmly to their own faith and still honor the faith and dignity of another. Our belief that every human being is made in the image of God (Gn 1:27) invites us to do the same.

So what peace are we called to nurture? The Scriptures answer: peace is the fruit of justice, for “justice and peace will kiss each other” (Ps 85:10). It grows through daily choices: “Seek peace and pursue it” (Ps 34:14), and St. Paul tells us: “if it is possible... live peacefully with all” (cf. Rm 12:18). It begins in the heart, then in the family, then in the community, and it reaches the nations.

And what peace must we protect? Peace is precious and fragile. It is protected by mercy, by truthful dialogue, by our respect for every person’s conscience, and by our care for the earth we share, which Francis loved as a gift from God. Tonight we pray for those entrusted with the good of their peoples, that God grant them wisdom and compassion, and for every place where peace is wounded. We pray—as the prophet Isaiah envisions—for the day when nations “shall not lift sword against other nation” (Isaiah 2:4).

Tonight, let us allow music to speak where words fall short. With music, we heal wounds of division. Let music calm our hearts, and let us feel the peace it gives us all. So that, beginning with ourselves, we can give it to others, as St. Francis did. May it lift our hearts to God and remind us that we are one human family.

In the ancient blessing that Francis gave his brothers, I would like to borrow it and wish you the same: “The Lord bless you and keep you... the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace” (Nm 6:24–26).

Thank you, and let us enjoy the rest of the night—filled with love and peace!



Organizer:
Cathedral of Our Lady of Arabia
Kingdom of Bahrain

Under the Guidance of
H.E. Bishop Aldo Berardi O.S.S.T.
Apostolic Vicar of Northern Arabia

Concept and Storyline:
Fr. Marcus Fernandes OFM.Cap.

Musicians and Singers :
Parishioners of Bahrain



Saturday, 19th
September 2026



07:45 PM



Cathedral of
Our Lady of Arabia

San Francesco 800 link: <https://www.youtube.com/live/neHAI-Z8yRc>

The Cathedral of Our Lady of Arabia in Awali, Kingdom of Bahrain, hosted San Francesco 800 – A Musical Journey of Faith on Saturday, 19 September 2026. The event commemorated the 800th anniversary of the passing of St Francis of Assisi (1226–2026), bringing together hundreds of faithful, dignitaries, musicians, singers and artists for an evening of music, storytelling and spiritual reflection.

Conceived and written by Fr Marcus Fernandes, OFM Cap., and presented under the guidance of Bishop Aldo Berardi, O.S.S.T., the production transformed the magnificent ark-shaped cathedral into an immersive theatrical and musical experience.

Opening Address and Distinguished Guests

The evening was attended by prominent national and international dignitaries, reflecting Bahrain's commitment to coexistence, religious tolerance and interfaith dialogue. The event drew prominent community leaders, underscoring Bahrain's identity as a beacon of cross-cultural harmony.

In his opening remarks, H.E. Bishop Aldo Berardi, Apostolic Vicar of Northern Arabia greeted the gathering with the words, "Peace be upon you", recalling the greeting of St. Francis of Assisi, "Pax et Bonum." He also offered a blessing: "May the Lord bless you and keep you, may His countenance shine upon you and give you His Peace."

A keynote address opened the evening via H.E. Shaikh Abdulla bin Ahmed Al Khalifa, Minister of Transportation and Telecommunications and Chairman of the King Hamad Global Center for Peaceful Coexistence.

Notable attendees included:

- H.E. Andrea Catalano, the Ambassador of Italy to Bahrain, who attended to honor Italy's patron saint.
- H.E. Gines Jaime Ricardo D. Gallaga, the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Embassy of the Republic of the Philippines.
- H.E. Eric Giraud-Telme Ambassador, French Embassy.
- H.E. Choi Byoung-sun Ambassador, Embassy of the Republic of (South) Korea.
- H.E. Shereen Shanika Dissanayake, Ambassador of Sri Lanka.
- H.E. Dr. Andreas Eliades, Ambassador of Cyprus.
- H.E. Stephanie Hallett, US Ambassador.
- H.E. Henning Simon, German Ambassador.
- H.E. Simon Martin, Chargé D'Affaires of the UK Embassy
- H.E. Ali Abdulla Al Aradi, Deputy Chairman, KHGC
- H.E. Muneera Nofal Al Doseri, Executive Director, KHGC
- H.E. Shaikha Maryam Humood Al Khalifa, Acting Director of Coexistence, KHGC
- Ms. Muna George KORO, Senior Specialist, KHGC and family
- Mr. Abdulla Al Heddi, KHGC Protocol
- Rev. Rob Jones, Deacon St. Christopher's Cathedral, Manama.



*H. E. Bishop Aldo Berardi offering the Peace Lily flower pot to
H.E. Shaikh Abdulla bin Ahmed Al Khalifa.*



The Artistic Elements: Music, Choir, and Narration

The production chronicled the life of the Poverello d'Assisi (the poor man of Assisi), tracing the spiritual journey of St Francis, from his early life as the son of a wealthy merchant to his embrace of poverty, humility, fraternity and peace. It consisted of an ensemble of 21 musicians, 42 adult singers, and 17 children through 14 meticulously selected songs, storytelling, and dramatic narration.

Anchored by the Franciscan motto “Pace e Bene” (Peace and Good will), the performance seamlessly shifted between storytelling and musical expression highlighting key milestones of St. Francis’s journey:

- The Calling: The actors dramatically portrayed Francis’s internal struggle and ultimate surrender to God, shifting from a luxury-loving young soldier to a champion of the poor.

- The Cantic of the Sun: A major musical highlight, the choir led an uplifting rendition celebrating St. Francis's deep reverence for creation.
- The Bridge of Peace: The script prominently featured Francis's historic 1219 meeting with Sultan Al-Kamil in Damietta, Egypt, a historical lesson on interfaith dialogue that resonated deeply within the Arabian Gulf context.



1. The Orchestral Blueprint (The Musicians)

The production featured an ensemble of 21 instrumentalists, led by Carmo Fernandes, who seamlessly blended classical arrangements with sacred liturgical melodies. Music writers Roubay G. Centeno and Omie Matic contributed to the arrangements, which shifted from the vibrant tunes of Francis's youth to the serene melodies associated with his embrace of poverty and creation.

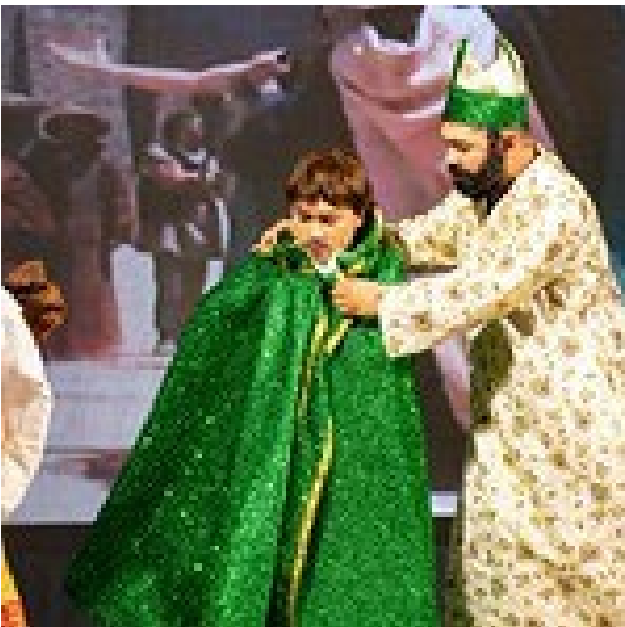
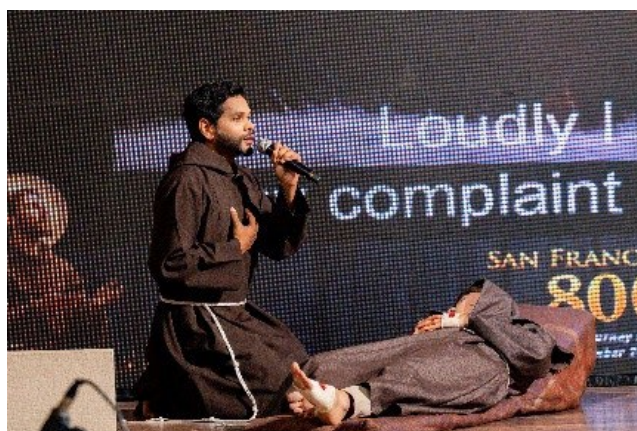
2. The Choral Tapestry (The Choirs)

Under the creative direction of Fr. Marcus Fernandes, the multi-generational choir comprised of 42 adult singers and 17 children. Maestro Larry, directed the 14 musical pieces along with music coordinators Grace and Mhacksies, helped lead the musical presentation.

The children's choir, directed by Mrs Christabel Menezes, brought a joyful dimension to the evening through its rendition of Peace Begins with Me. Their performance conveyed the message that peace begins within each person and can be fostered through simple, everyday actions.

The blend of adult harmonies also underscored the significance of the Transitus—St Francis's passing into eternal life—creating a deeply moving, immersive musical experience.

3. The Dramatic Arc (The Actors and Storytelling)



More than a concert, the event was structured as a theatrical journey of faith. The actors, Kenneth Garcia (St. Francis of Assisi), Janhussein Logatiman (Pietro Bernandone), Dennis Lester (Bishop), Sidney Sequeira (the Sultan) and Bezel Antao (Friar). The narration was delivered by Miss Chris Noronha and Master Shelton Fernandes skillfully navigating through the pivotal moments of Francis's life:

- His early life as a wealthy merchant's son who dreamed of becoming a knight.
- The radical spiritual transformation following his mystical vision at San Damiano.
- His historic encounter with Sultan al-Kamil in Damietta, Egypt, in 1219

The encounter between St Francis and the Sultan highlighted the enduring importance of interfaith dialogue and understanding across religious and cultural differences.

A Message of Peace and Coexistence

The event resonated with Bahrain's Year of Isa Al Kabir, honoring a shared legacy of global coexistence and dialogue. The presence of national and international dignitaries underscored the relevance of St Francis's message in a diverse society.



Offering of the Peace prayer

H.E. Andrea Catalano, the Ambassador of Italy to Bahrain, noted how the production aligned beautifully with international celebrations promoted by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, magnifying St. Francis's role as a timeless patron of peace and brotherhood.

As the final notes of the 14th song faded into a standing ovation, "San Francesco 800" proved to be much more than a routine anniversary performance. It stood as a historic milestone for the Vicariate of Northern Arabia, showcasing how local musicians, actors, and choristers could unite a diverse migrant community under a shared banner of faith, art, and fraternity.

The evening concluded with appreciation for everyone who had contributed to the production. In his vote of thanks, Fr Marcus Fernandes said, "Together, we did something beautiful today."

The performance served as a testament to the Kingdom of Bahrain's enduring commitment to cultural diversity and religious tolerance.

Global Reach

For those unable to attend in person, the celebration was made available through a livestream on the Cathedral of Our Lady of Arabia's YouTube channel.

Event livestream: <https://www.youtube.com/live/neHAI-Z8yRc>

The event also received international media attention. Coverage and related posts appeared through the following outlets and platforms:

- Vatican news : <https://www.vaticannews.va/it/chiesa/news/2026-09/arabia-del-nord-viaggio-musicale-nella-fede-per-san-francesco.html>
- Agenzia Fides <https://youtube.com/live/neHAI-Z8yRc?feature=share>
- EWTN: <https://www.acimena.com/news/9445/amsy-mosykyw-orozyw-fy-albhryn-ahtfaaaan-balsn-alyobylyw-alfnrsysyw>
- Shalom World News: <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1CBLVaABHV/>
- Bahrain News: <https://share.google/R2ZFb0M34xo9d0Nus>
- KHGCinstagram: https://www.instagram.com/p/Ddex4V3DP8m/?img_index=3&stkn=bDgzYW1uOTg5ZXVx
- Bahrain This Month: <https://www.facebook.com/share/19UnVKQzez/?mibextid=wwXIfr>
- 800 Tahun Santo Fransiskus Asisi: (Indonesian) <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1Crqg5JWJi/>

Written by

Miss. Chris Norohna, MC of the San Francesco 800-Bahrain and Fr. Marcus Fernandes OFM. Cap.

Holy Childhood ACTIVITIES

Cathedral of Our Lady of Arabia, Awali,
Bahrain – post-Easter 2026



Mrs. Olga
*Holy Childhood Coordinator,
Awali, Bahrain*

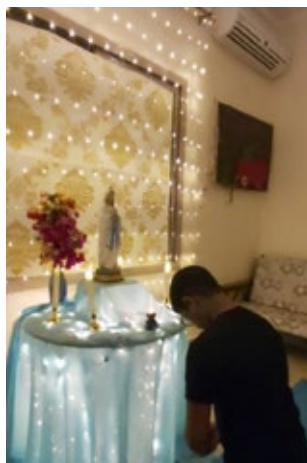
Prayers for Peace During the Middle East Conflict

During the conflict in the Middle East, the Holy Childhood Society at the Cathedral of Our Lady of Arabia, Awali, invited children to pray for peace. The initiative aimed to help them remain conscious of God's presence during a time of fear and uncertainty and to offer them hope for a more peaceful future.

Activities and Celebrations

2 April – Prayer to Mother Mary

All members of the Holy Childhood Society were invited to undertake a special prayer activity at home. They were asked to place a statue of Mother Mary on a small table, decorate it with flowers, candles or other simple items, and spend a few minutes praying for peace in Bahrain and throughout the world. After the prayer, the children were asked to send a photograph of themselves with the statue of Mother Mary to Fr Marcus.



29 May – Rosary After Mass

The children were invited to join the Rosary following Holy Mass.

13 August – World Mission Rosary Workshop

The Holy Childhood Society organised a workshop on the World Mission Rosary.

25 September – World Children's Day

World Children's Day was celebrated, marking the importance of children and their participation in the life and mission of the Church.

Report on the World Mission Rosary-Making Workshop

The Holy Childhood Society conducted a World Mission Rosary-Making Workshop on 12 August at 4:00 p.m. in the auditorium of the Our Lady of Arabia. The workshop brought together 17 children and their parents for an afternoon of prayer, learning, creativity and fellowship.

The workshop was led by Mrs Rani Joseph, who patiently guided the children and their parents through the process of making the World Mission Rosary. Fr Marcus Fernandes arranged the beads, using the colours that represent the different continents of the world.

The programme began with a prayer, setting a peaceful and spiritual tone for the afternoon. Mrs Rani then demonstrated each step, beginning with the rosary knot. The children were eager to learn and, with patient guidance and hands-on practice, gradually learned to connect the components and assemble their rosaries.



A highlight of the workshop was learning about the significance of the five colours of the World Mission Rosary and the continents they represent. The children discovered how praying the World Mission Rosary encourages them to remember children and people across the world in their prayers. Both children and parents participated enthusiastically, creating an atmosphere of concentration, cooperation and joy as they worked together.



The most beautiful and spiritually enriching moment came after the rosaries were completed. The children and their parents were taken to the Chapel of Our Lady of Arabia, where the newly made rosaries were blessed. Everyone then joined together in praying a decade of the Rosary. This special moment, beautifully connected the practical activity of making the rosary, with the mission of the Holy Childhood Society—children praying for children around the world.

The workshop concluded with photographs to capture the memorable occasion, followed by the distribution of donuts to the children, ending the celebration on a sweet and happy note.

The World Mission Rosary-Making Workshop was a meaningful experience that combined creativity with faith and missionary awareness. It helped the children appreciate the importance of praying for people across the continents and reminded them that even the youngest members of the Church can participate in its universal mission. The enthusiastic involvement of the children and their parents made the gathering a memorable celebration of prayer, togetherness and missionary spirit.



Fr. Rosario Colaco
Spiritual Director of the Holy
Childhood Society, Qatar

Historic Day in the Qatar Church: Inauguration of the Holy Childhood Society in Doha

“On your mark, get ready, and set—go!” on your missionary journey of the Holy Childhood. This inspiring tone by Fr. Marcus Fernandes (Delegate of the Missio-AVONA), during the homily of the inaugural Holy Mass, perfectly captured the historic launch of the Holy Childhood Society at Our Lady of the Rosary, Doha on Saturday, 26 September 2026.

The Solemn Inauguration and Blessing

The Holy Childhood Society, one of the four prestigious Pontifical Mission Societies, officially marked its historical entry into Qatar during a solemn 5:30pm Holy Mass.

Registered members aged 6 to 14 formed the core of the new society. During the Holy Mass, the children took a formal pledge and received blessings from: Fr. Ruben Berramedia (Vicar General), Fr. Paul Raj (Parish Priest), Fr. Rosario Colaco (Spiritual Director) and Fr. Marcus Fernandes (Delegate of Missio-AVONA)

The homily encouraged the children to begin their missionary journey with faith and enthusiasm, reminding them that they too have an important role in the mission of the Church.

A Colourful Celebration of Faith and Fellowship

Following Holy Mass, around 80 children gathered in the parish’s Seraphic Hall for the celebrations. They were divided into four teams and each team wore coloured wristbands representing the colours of the Missio-AVONA logo: green, maroon, purple and blue.

The children and members of the society’s core team kicked-off the event with a symbolic activity, dipping their thumbs in paint and leaving their prints on a tree poster. The activity represented their commitment to growing together in faith and sharing the love of Christ.

Messages of Encouragement

Fr. Marcus Fernandes conveyed a special message

and blessing from H.E. Bishop Aldo Berardi: “I encourage you children to live the mission of the Holy Childhood Society and I bless you. Soon I will meet you.”

Fr. Rosario Colaco, the Spiritual Director of the Society in Qatar, also warmly addressed the children, encouraging them to remain committed to prayer and missionary service.

A celebratory cake, prepared by Ms Shimona, was cut by the children and priests to mark the inauguration of the society in Qatar.

Team Activities and Friendly Competition

Ms Carol, the Master of Ceremonies, hosted the programme with enthusiasm and invited the children to create names and poses for their teams. The four teams were Team Love (Green), Team Faith (Red), Team Wisdom (Blue), and Team PHB (Purple Holy Believers).

A lively quiz brought the teams together in a friendly competition, with Team Wisdom emerging as the winner.

Music, Dance and the Mission of the Children

The parish’s English youth group, Youth Ignited for Christ, led the children in action songs, encouraging parents and children alike to join in the singing and dancing. The activity added to the spirit of joy and fellowship that marked the occasion. Ms Effie, who beautifully decorated the stage, helped create a welcoming setting for the occasion.

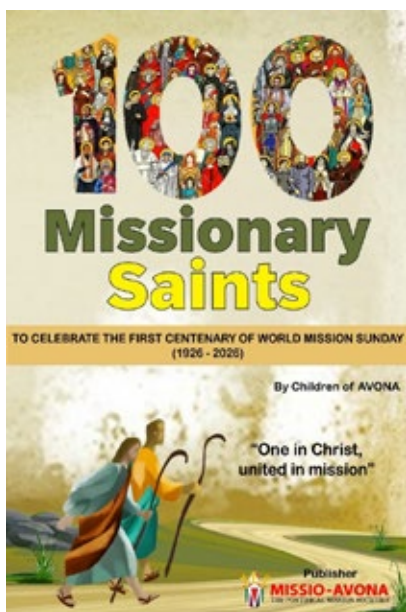
The inauguration event concluded with a prize distribution ceremony. Through the Mass, team activities, music and fellowship, the children were encouraged to put the motto of the Holy Childhood Society into practice in their daily lives: “Pray, Help, and Share.”

Watch the inaugural Holy Mass on

YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/live/hq4HrXKn9rM?si=C1if_rtvvL194S0k



https://www.fides.org/en/news/78251-ASIA_QATAR_The_Inauguration_of_the_Holy_Childhood_society_a_joyful_day_for_the_Church_in_the_country



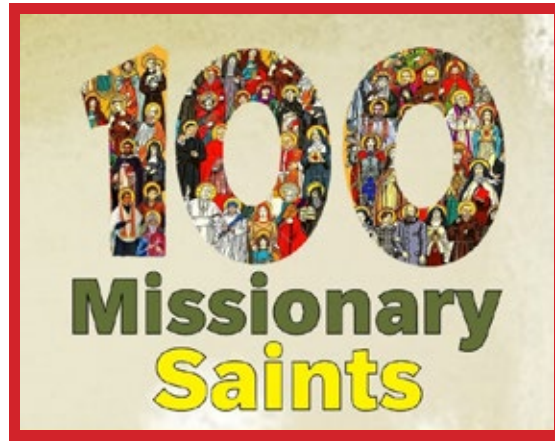
After working closely on the book 100 Missionary Saints, I can summarize it in a phrase as “the Missionary Fire”.

Fire has two essential qualities: light and heat. Light is the truth of the Gospel; heat is the passion to proclaim it. A missionary burns with both. This fire is kindled by the Holy Spirit, who guides the missionaries in the proclamation of Gospel.

The missionary saints in this book lived this fire in different ways. Some formed others for the mission, some prayed for and supported missionaries, and many travelled to distant lands to preach the Gospel. Whatever their calling, their fire never counted the cost. Some even gave their lives.

It brings me great joy that this book was written by one hundred children. By bringing them together to tell the stories of these saints, we hope the same fire will be passed on to a new generation. May these young writers, and every young reader, catch the light and the heat of the missionary spirit.

Fr. Marcus Fernandes OFM.Cap
 (Delegate of Missio-Avona)
 Editor of the book 100 Missionary Saint



REFLECTIONS

Readers' Reflections on 100 Missionary Saints

Lovely Effort

It is wonderful to see our children come together to create this beautiful book on 100 Missionary Saints. Their effort, interest, and enthusiasm are truly appreciated. Special thanks to Fr. Marcus for encouraging and guiding them and giving them the confidence to share their work.

Well done, and congratulations on this lovely achievement!

Tr. Olga Fernandes

Sacred Heart School, Bahrain

(Coordinator of the Holy Childhood Society, Awali)

An Inspiring Initiative

I have just finished reading 100 Missionary Saints, and I commend you, Fr. Marcus Fernandes, for this beautiful and inspiring initiative. The Catechism children from different parishes of AVONA have done a wonderful job writing about the saints.

I thoroughly enjoyed reading the book and learning about some saints who were new to me. Well done, Father, on such a wonderful initiative and fantastic idea. It is truly inspiring to see the faith of these young people expressed in such a meaningful way. I have no comments but praise!

Mrs. Philomena

Our Lady of Rosary Church, Qatar.

A Book That Inspires Faith and Service

100 Missionary Saints is a collection of stories about 100 saints, written by children under the guidance of Fr. Marcus. The book is a tribute to these saints, offering uplifting lessons on faith, perseverance, prayer and service. Fr. Marcus's initiative has given children a wonderful opportunity to explore the lives of saints, learn from their experiences and miracles, and reflect on the lessons their lives offer.

The book reminds us that it is never too late to turn to the Lord and that faith can renew our strength despite hardships. Its strongest message is that we are called to serve others while respecting the dignity of every person, including those from communities different from our own.

Reading it also made me wish I had had a similar opportunity as a teenager to research the lives of saints through writing. I believe that reading about one saint each day can strengthen our faith and draw us closer to God. I hope a second volume will introduce readers to more saints whose lives can inspire us.

Sharlet Mary Alvares

Author, Artistic and Therapeutic Director of Specia Academy

UPCOMING EVENTS



AVONA Mission Sunday Cup 2026

To mark the centenary of World Mission Sunday in 2026, the Missio-AVONA Office of the Apostolic Vicariate of Northern Arabia, which covers Bahrain, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Qatar, is pleased to introduce the AVONA Mission Sunday Cup 2026.

The tournament will feature a rolling trophy to be contested annually on the third Friday of October. Its primary aim is to raise awareness among young people about World Mission Sunday and its missionary purpose.



Serenade – Second Edition

The second edition of Serenade, the carol-singing competition for children across AVONA, is **COMING SOON**.





MISSION PRAYER

Holy Father, make us one in Christ, rooted in his love that unites and renews. May all members of the Church be united in mission, docile to the Holy Spirit, courageous in bearing witness to the Gospel, proclaiming and daily embodying your faithful love for all creatures.

Bless all missionary men and women, support them in their efforts, and watch over them in hope!

Mary, Queen of Missions, accompany our work of evangelization in every corner of the earth: make us instruments of peace, and grant that the whole world may recognize in Christ the light that saves. Amen.

Pope Leo XIV



MISSIO-AVONA

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