



*PONTIFICAL MISSION SOCIETIES*

*ZIMBABWE*





*“Let the Children come to me”*  
**Mt 19:14**

The Feast day of our “Young Missionaries” is fast approaching. This year the Feast will be celebrated on the 7<sup>th</sup> of February.

Will churches be open by then? Only God knows. If not, how will the Church help our children celebrate their important day on the Church calendar. Unfortunately, we will have to do this within the “Domestic Church”.

Parents and guardians should take this opportunity to catechise children on the important role of the Domestic Church in the life of the Universal Church.

The theme for this year is *“We cannot stop proclaiming what we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:20)*.

Certainly nothing can stop us and our children from proclaiming the Good News. COVID 19 and the ensuing lockdowns should not be given as an excuse for not helping our children to come closer to Jesus. Jesus still wants the children to come to him and to touch them.

As our Churches search for a “new normal” in the midst of the COVID 19 pandemic, our children are most vulnerable in trying to negotiate this new normal. It is important to address the anxiety of children over the corona virus. One child was filmed crying for his elder sibling who had gone out of home during the lockdown and when asked why he was crying his response was: “going out he will contract corona and bring it to us”

Children feel like they are imprisoned. They miss personal contact with their friends and it is very hard for them to understand why except the threats that they hear from parents and guardians that outside there is corona and have to stay home to remain alive.

Children are not allowed to go out, to meet their friends, they cannot go to School and they are not allowed to go and worship with their parents.

Where does this leave our vulnerable children? They are needy and dependent and they know almost nothing about life. Our Lord Jesus Christ’s response to the disciples who were blocking children from going to Him was: “Let the children come to me!”

Churches are an integral part of our communities and are often on the frontline of responding to disasters, both practically and pastorally.

Experience from previous epidemics has shown that churches are particularly well placed to build trust and hope, to counter fear and to build community resilience as well as individual mental and spiritual resilience.

It is time for all of us to find ways of bringing children to Jesus. This formative period of the children is very delicate and needs to be handled with care. The worst that can happen to any family, community and Church is to neglect this age group as the repercussions will be felt in the near future.

It's very important that we engage each other and come up with ways of engaging this age group.

We need to convince each other that 'the Church does not close, only the building. We are the Church, the living body of our Lord and we are everywhere' This, I think is a good starting point and it reminds all of us that we are teachers of faith.

Jesus' command to 'let the children come to me' reveals several truths:

- i. Children need to be blessed by the Lord
- ii. The Lord wants to bless children
- iii. Parents should be encouraged to bring children to Jesus and to teach them His ways.

Now it's time to put our heads together and use the available resources at our disposal to reach out to our children. Technology comes in handy here and thank God our children are more familiar with some of these information technology than some of us.

Here are some suggestions on how we can use technology to bring our children to Jesus so that He can bless them.

1. Have someone make a video reading a Bible story and send it to parents for their children to watch. Parents could then ask their children to share their understanding of the bible passage. Some of our animators are good at this.
2. Biblical Pastoral Ministry Commission is running a bible study program called 'Home in the Word' that is another great resource for sharing in families.
3. Encourage children to be 'on mission' by writing cards of encouragement to first responders (School teachers, health workers etc.) and thanking them for their sacrifices.
4. We can also encourage children to participate in the *praying the Rosary*". By praying the Rosary, we give children the most important protection of all and equip them with the best possible 'protective armour' for their future path in life. This exercise teaches children to be aware of their missionary role of praying for the world and to come to know Mary as their Mother who brings them to Her Son Jesus Christ.
5. Children have now been exposed to the use of radio lessons. This is another very important resource for reaching out to children. Catechetical programs could be

taught through this medium. It is unfortunate that the process of registering our Catholic Radio Station “Radio Maria” has taken longer than anticipated. Let us all pray for the success of this important step for the Church in Zimbabwe.

The command of Jesus *‘let the children come to me’* should continue to push us to find more ways of ministering to our children in this ‘new normal’. Jesus wants to touch them and to bless them so let us clear the many obstacles that may prevent Him from reaching out to them.

Yes, it might be difficult for our children to go out, but we are the living Body of Christ, the Church. Let’s make them feel the presence of Jesus wherever they are. Taking care of this generation means growth for the Church.

Let us help our children to celebrate their Feast in style this year.

Let us not also forget to do one of the most honourable gesture on this day, namely, our generous contribution to the Universal Solidarity Fund. Our contributions go a long way in helping the Pope to attend to the needs of millions of children around the world.

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