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Cover image: A little girl helping her mother prepare a family meal at the Maize Mill Project site in Zambia.

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Names of people under 18 years have been changed.

Catholic Mission acknowledges that we live and work on the land of Australia's First Peoples. We pay our respect to the ever-present spirituality of Elders past and present.

This publication may include images of deceased persons.





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Reach out. Give life.

A Message from the National Director

It is with deep gratitude that I present to you this edition of *Mission Today*, as my final contribution as National Director of Catholic Mission. After 10 years in this ministry, I leave with a heart full of hope.

Hope has been a constant companion on this journey and remains central to the work we do as missionaries of hope among all peoples. As we enter the era of Pope Leo XIV, drawing on the wisdom of Pope Francis' teachings, we continue to live and share the Gospel values, here in Australia and overseas.

In this Jubilee Year of Hope, and with the 2025 theme for World Mission Month, 'Missionaries of hope among all peoples', we are reminded that hope is not a passive feeling. It is at the heart of mission and must be built together by us all. It grows when we walk with others, when we listen, when we serve. From the Diocese of Mpika in Zambia to Marrickville Parish (NSW), Catholic Mission continues to build relationships that bring warmth, dignity and transformation.

In this magazine, you will read how hope is central to all we do. It is through hope that we move forward and continue building the Kingdom of God. Witnessing this work gives me great confidence in the future.

As I move into a new ministry, I do so with the certainty that the seeds of hope we have sown together will continue to flourish through your support and dedication.

Thank you for walking this journey of mission with us and continuing to do so.

Yours in Mission,



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Above: Footage from the documentary retracing Robert Francis Prevost's mission in Peru before he became

Pope Leo XIV.

A Missionary Shepherd for the Global Church

On May 8, the words Habemus Papam echoed through St Peter's Square, announcing the election of the 267th Supreme Pontiff of the Roman Catholic Church. Pope Leo XIV, the successor to Pope Francis, stepped into the role of Holy Father with the heart and hands of a missionary.

Before his election, Pope Leo XIV, formerly Cardinal Robert Francis Prevost, served for decades as an Augustinian missionary in Peru. Never treating mission as a task but as a calling, he lived among the people, shared in their joys and sorrows, and embraced their culture as his own. This on-the-ground experience has shaped his vision for the Universal Global Church as a missionary Church rooted in solidarity, compassion and hope.

Pope Leo XIV embodies the missionary spirit not only through his words but through his actions. His time in Peru was not spent behind a desk but in the streets, in people's homes, learning the language, sharing meals and offering his presence as a brother.

"He's someone who walks with people, who brings them along on the journey,"

said former colleague Fr Joseph Farrell, the American Prior General of the Order of St Augustine. "That's what mission is. Pope Francis said the Church doesn't just have a mission, it is a mission. I think Pope Leo XIV will continue that."

Many have suggested that the new Pope's leadership style is one of accompaniment. It reflects the understanding that the Gospel is best proposed, not imposed, and shared with joy and compassion. His vision is in continuity with Pope Francis' dream of a Church that is poor and for the poor, that relentlessly reaches out to the margins and peripheries.

In his first address, Pope Leo XIV reminded that the Church's mission is both local and universal.

"In Christ we are one, a family of God, beyond the rich variety of our languages, cultures and experiences," he said.

In a time of uncertainty and division, Pope Leo XIV brings renewed hope that the Church can be a light in the darkness and a place of belonging. As we begin this new chapter, he reminds us that faith is active, calling us to proclaim Christ through lives of compassion, justice and love.







How the Maize Mill Project is Transforming Communities in Mpika Diocese

There are many elements that contribute to a flourishing community. Access to healthcare, education, shelter and basic resources are vital, but without an economic foundation, these efforts cannot be sustained.

Guided by the values of the Gospel, Catholic Mission has been working alongside the Diocese of Mpika in Zambia to foster a sustainable and inclusive local economy. This collaboration, aligned with the global vision of the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals, seeks to create opportunities that uplift the entire community, especially the most vulnerable.

The Maize Mill Project was born from a shared vision of stewardship and justice in response to Zambia's worsening food crisis.

In 2024, the country entered a state of emergency as drought, inflation and falling crop yields drove up prices and deepened hunger. In Mpika, communities were trapped in a cycle of selling maize cheaply and buying it back as costly flour. To break this pattern, Bishop Edwin Mulandu launched the Maize Mill Project, a locally driven initiative that promotes food security, economic dignity and care for creation.

A significant and often overlooked strength within the community has been its women, many of whom were previously excluded from traditional economic roles.

As a diocese, we strongly feel and are convinced that empowering women will solve a lot of issues at a household level and in the community,"

shared Bishop Mulandu.

Already, the project has brought together more than 1000 women from across the diocese, with many more hoping to join. These women are provided with seeds, fertiliser and training to help them grow their crops.

Once harvested, the maize is purchased by the diocese at a fair and pre-set price, then processed into flour through the mill and returned to serve the needs of the local community. Major buyers of produce include hospitals, boarding schools, hotels, lodges, business communities, workers and the local communities within the district.

By applying the principles of the circular economy, the project is not only feeding the community and laying the foundation for a sustainable local economy but most importantly, it is empowering the women involved by providing them with a fair and dignified source of income.

"It's not only training and employment opportunities, but it gives women in the community a space to come together and share challenges in a safe environment and access support if needed," said Conor Nolan, Catholic Mission's Program Officer in charge of facilitating the project.

This World Mission Month, Pope Leo XIV has echoed the call of Pope Francis, encouraging us to take up the challenge of being 'pilgrims of hope', reminding us that our faith compels us to step out, to walk with those on the margins and to share the hope of Christ through acts of love.

In these words, we are reminded that mission is not something distant, it is lived each day when we open our hearts to others. Your support this World Mission Month becomes an expression of the missionary spirit, bringing tangible hope to families in Zambia, who hold on in faith for a better tomorrow.





Sowing Seeds of Hope in Mpika

Sharon and Victor are a family of six, with children aged from 3 to 17 years, living in the Diocese of Mpika, Zambia. After heavy rainfall destroyed their traditional hut last year, leaving them with nothing, the family now lives in a house generously provided by a friend.

"We felt bad when it happened," shared Sharon.
"We managed to remove some things because we were around when it was raining. We accepted everything because it was nature that destroyed our house."

Currently, the family grows vegetables and maize on their quarter hectare parcel of land. Their survival depends on a mix of selling some of their crops to obtain basic necessities, and feeding their family with the rest. However, even with farming, they do not have enough food for the whole year, with their harvest lasting them only eight months. Sharon does her best to stretch what they have to ensure there is always something to provide, even if it is just a little.

"What makes me happy in life is that my wife knows how to manage the little things that we have, she doesn't misuse things, she makes sure that everyone is taken care of using the same small things," Victor said.

But with the loss of their house, their eldest child hoping to go to university, and the current economic situation, it has become difficult for the family to keep living on their limited resources.

"Things have really become hard here, people are failing to support their families," added Victor in despair.

"Your hands are tied, you have got nowhere to get the money from and when you try to think about your life, you can tell that there is no light at the end of the tunnel, because if I can be struggling now, what about in the future? It means my family will continue living in poverty and in sorrow, there is no progress."

But through the Maize Mill Project, there is finally hope at the end of the tunnel, giving Victor's family the opportunity not just to survive, but to thrive.

By providing women in the community with seeds, fertilisers and increased agricultural knowledge, they now have a real opportunity to generate a sustainable income and lift their families out of poverty.

In partnership with the local chiefs, more land is being made accessible to women for growing maize and other crops – a meaningful opportunity to expand production and be able to provide for their families.

When Sharon was invited to be part of this women's collective, her response was filled with hope and joy.

"If they give us all that? It's symbolising progress and blessings," she said.

"We have started molding bricks for our new house...that would be our greatest motivation to work very hard if we were given that opportunity to receive the farming inputs."

Victor agreed, saying it was a "blessing" for Sharon to be in this organisation.

We shall work hard so that we can achieve our dream and take our daughter to the university because God has given us the strength and power to work hard,"

Victor said.

Below: Sharon and Victor with three of their children in front of the parish church.





Above:

The logo of the new professional membership association for formators for Mission.

A Space for Formators to Connect, Reflect and Grow

As we journey through the Jubilee Year of Hope, new initiatives are emerging across the Church in Australia to foster a more secure and hope-filled future. Rooted in the Gospel and responsive to the challenges of our time, these efforts aim to strengthen our shared mission.

One initiative is formation.org.au, Australia's professional membership association of formation for Mission. It has been created to support those who lead, design, facilitate, and deliver formation for Mission across diverse contexts.

"formation.org.au is a courageous and hope-filled initiative. It offers the whole of the Church in Australia an opportunity to connect and collaborate on the work of formation, to be creative, and to do so emboldened by the Holy Spirit, who gives us courage," said Lana Turvey-Collins, Lead Facilitator of formation.org.au.

Informed by the discernment of the Plenary Council and the needs observed across ministries in recent years, Lana collaborated with formation practitioners across multiple sectors to establish formation.org.au as a professional membership association dedicated to formators.

"The vision for formation.org.au is to be a permanent platform for dialogue and connection for all people who are engaged in formation for Mission," Lana shared.

Across the many and varied parts of the Church, deep thinking is taking place around the future of formation for Mission. Important questions are being asked, not only operational as who and how, the questions go deeper to the heart of what it means to be a missionary Church."

Lana added that formation.org.au is, at its core, about connection – with one another, with God and with our innermost selves. Disconnected, the work of formation cannot flourish. This shared ministry of guiding, accompanying, and equipping others for mission must be embedded in relationship, prayer and purpose.

Today's formators work in a wide range of settings including Catholic education, diocesan ministries, seminaries, novitiates, interfaith spaces, lay leadership, chaplaincies and social services. Through formation.org.au they are provided a space to gather, reflect and grow together.



Harnessing the Power of Storytelling: Connecting Faith, Culture and Generations

Bringing together the voices and experiences from different cultures, generations and ministries was a highlight of an inspiring event held to celebrate NAIDOC Week in July.

Organised through a partnership between Catholic Mission, the Australian Catholic University and formation.org.au, the inaugural professional learning event provided an opportunity for reflection on the power of story to connect, heal and lead.

'Harnessing the Power of Storytelling: Connecting Generations, Community and Culture' featured a panel of three powerful storytellers weaving culture, faith and identity through their lived experience and professional leadership.

Dr Kelly Humphrey, a proud Gomeroi woman and ACU's Pro-Vice Chancellor, Indigenous, shared insights from her doctoral research, using the tradition of basket weaving to explore the leadership journeys of Aboriginal educators.

"These are not merely baskets," she noted, "they are story-carriers."

Erica Bernard, a Yawuru-kidja woman from Broome, spoke of the transformative power of deep listening, sharing stories from her community that highlighted the role of faith and culture in shaping formation for Mission.

From Zambia, Dorothy Makasa, a Soli woman and member of the Australian Storytellers Guild, brought an international perspective, showing how preserving language and tradition safeguards community identity. She drew on the spirit of Ubuntu – 'I am because we are' – to emphasise the shared and interwoven nature of story across cultures.

Lana Turvey-Collins, Lead Facilitator of formation.org.au, reflected on the success of the event.

"I am grateful to Kelly, Erica and Dorothy for sharing their incredible wisdom and am proud that we were able to host our first event to celebrate NAIDOC Week," she said.



Above: Lana Turvey-Collins facilitating the gathering of storytellers for the NAIDOC Week 2025 event.

The sharing of gifts and wisdom in this way is what this new association will continue to offer for all people who are designing, facilitating and leading formation for Mission in so many places and across so many ministries in the Church in Australia today."

The event not only honoured the significance of NAIDOC Week but highlighted the universal language of storytelling as a way to connect hearts and inspire hope.

The recorded session will soon be available as part of the professional learning library for members of formation.org.au. To find out more, visit the website and explore future opportunities for learning and connection.



Above:

Estela Padilla (R) was joined by Bishop Tim Norton SVD, Joshua Lourensz, and Anne Chellingworth for a panel discussion on 'Choosing hope. Trust yourself to its leading' on the final day of the conference.

Shaping a Church that Listens with Heart

Earlier this year, the 'Mission: one heart many voices' conference took place in Sydney, offering a platform for deep listening – an essential element to moving forward.

As the conference's main keynote speaker Estela Padilla explained, deep listening is necessary for the Church to move forward and it is reflected in the Synod on Synodality documents.

"The second chapter of the Synod document is about the conversion of relationships," she said.

"It is encounter-based and is very central to what it means to be Church, all the relationships being converted towards becoming a more merciful Church, a more listening Church, and one more in solidarity.

"Looking at the Synod final document, the most important thing is the conversion of the heart. The whole document, even the chapter titles, speaks about conversion, and that is an experience of the heart that cannot be dictated by documents or structures. It can only be an experience you personally engage in."

Estela added that through the encounters with one another, the true conversion of hearts begins; a journey shared by many attendees as they discerned their time at the conference.

Reflecting on the conference, Estela revealed she also gained similar valuable lessons from her involvement with the Synod.

The first thing that struck me and has stayed with me, even after the Synod, was how different we are, and yet how we can open up to one another, even in our differences, and how we can discern together," she shared.

"There's another level to it: the listening, the opening up, and the ability to make decisions together.

"This whole process of communal discernment and decision making was the most important experience for me at the Synod, and one that I hope to carry forward at the local level."

Bishop Tim Norton SVD, who was one of the delegates at the conference, said it provided a wonderful opportunity for people from different walks of life to come together, share their wisdom and listen to one another.

"I think gatherings like this are really important just for us to reimagine ourselves again, to renew our relationships, then to be able to go out on mission in this world," he said.





One Year of Faith in Action at the **House of Mercy**

Last year, we highlighted the work we support in Mongolia, in partnership with Cardinal Giorgio Marengo IMC, Brother Andrew Le Phuong SBD, the local Catholic Church and the broader community.

Central to our work carried out on the ground is the House of Mercy, which provides a beacon of hope for individuals experiencing homelessness and family violence, particularly amidst the growing disparities in the capital, Ulaanbaatar.

Br Andrew, the Project Director of the House of Mercy, describes its mission as "revealing the love of Christ to everyone who comes through our doors, without distinction".

"We are dedicated to supporting homeless women and children suffering from domestic violence through our soup kitchen, shelter, medical first aid clinic and counselling services," he said.

On June 5 2025, the House of Mercy marked its first anniversary. In just one year of service it welcomed 48,680 people in need. Operated by a dedicated team of eight, including two doctors, the centre is currently open from Monday to Friday, with plans to extend its services into the evenings.

Each day, more than 100 meals are served to the people most in need. Some beneficiaries of the meal service also volunteer in the kitchen, a meaningful way to give back and foster a spirit of community, care and solidarity.

We are committed to creating an environment where all feel welcome, through selfless service, gratuitous love and a culture of compassion,"

Br Andrew shared.

The medical team is an essential part of the centre's services, addressing a critical lack of access to healthcare among many members of the local community. More than 150 patients are treated each month, and further arrangements are made by the team for more serious conditions.

The House of Mercy is becoming an integral part of the community with students from the Don Bosco Industrial Training Centre volunteering there two days a week. This is creating a full cycle of giving and receiving, while nurturing the importance of caring for one another.

More than a place for meals and basic services, the House of Mercy is growing into a vibrant and compassionate community, where people come not only for help but to share in their common humanity.

A aroup of beneficiaries gathering at the House of Mercv for a warm meal in Mongolia.

I earn more





Above: Bishop Tim Norton SVD with some parishioners following Mass in Fitzroy Crossing (WA).

Hope in the Parish Communities

As the Australian Church landscape evolves, parish communities still continue to provide a place of belonging and welcoming. Composed of diverse languages, cultures and generations, they bear witness to the love of God and the love for one another. There are many signs of hope emanating from parish communities.

Reflecting on his journey from working as a parish priest in Mexico to serving as Auxiliary Bishop in Brisbane and now Bishop of Broome, Bishop Tim Norton SVD shared how central the spirit of community remains.

"Whether we're talking about parishes or any kind of Christian community, I think it comes down to consistent and intentional efforts to include people, especially those who are different or on the margins," he said. "That, to me, is at the heart of Christian community."

From his perspective, mission is not limited to overseas efforts but is alive in everyday encounters.

"Mission is very much at home," Bishop Tim added.

"It's about stepping beyond our comfort zones, into new spaces, and engaging with people who are different from us. That's where we meet God."

This approach is clearly reflected in Broome, where diverse communities

- Aboriginal peoples, migrants and longtime residents - live side by side. Bishop Tim noted how meaningful expressions of faith can take shape through cultural integration, such as the development of the Missa Kimberley, a liturgy rooted in local spirituality and community participation.

We're still discovering how best to share in ways that are more complete and more inclusive," Bishop Tim said.

"When people from many cultures gather, there are so many gifts, so many new ways of understanding faith."

Despite ongoing challenges such as the declining number of priests and religious, the presence of strong lay leadership, the growing involvement of women and a deep spirit of hospitality continue to flourish in parishes. These signs point to a Church that is alive with possibility.

Across the country, people are listening deeply, adapting with courage and building bridges between cultures and generations. There is real hope in the creativity and resilience of parish communities.

As Bishop Tim reminds us, the Church's mission in Australia today is not only about presence but about encounter; becoming communities that listen, include and walk together in faith.



Building a Community of Hope and Welcome in Marrickville

Hope can be created anywhere – whether it is at the leadership level of the global Church through the Synod on Synodality, or within our own local communities – as demonstrated by one parish in Sydney that is changing the lives of refugees. Hope can stem from anywhere as soon as we come together to bear witness to that hope and continue to share it around.

In the Marrickville Parish, hope is shining brightly thanks to the hard work of passionate volunteers who have established the Marrickville Refugee Welcome Group. Part of the Community Refugee Sponsorship Program (CRISP), the initiative sees individuals and families welcomed to Australia by a community group facilitating their arrival and settlement.

The actions of the group are making a real difference to the lives of refugees and are a reminder of how a community can unite to provide a safe haven for those in desperate need of shelter, warmth, and love.

"People are coming from a community before it was torn apart," shared Pauline, a member of the Marrickville Refugee Welcome Group.

"Our community will extend their arms and will take these people in. We will.

It is so important to make them feel welcome and to have kindness. It is just so important for the family so that they can actually feel a sense of place."

The support provided by the group is significant and includes finding housing, schooling for children, employment and access to essential services.

The project has quickly extended beyond the parish walls, with the entire Marrickville community embracing it wholeheartedly.

"The community is very, very generous," Pauline explained.

"Whenever we've had an issue or project that has to do with the asylum seekers or refugees, they've just come forward, helping us raise money. It's just really important, as we want the family to be accepted by the community and to know that they can relax and build their life in this country."

Pauline believes her commitment to the group is an expression of her beliefs: "it is social justice in action".

Others involved in the program agree, reiterating it is not just about creating a home for the refugees, but giving them a future filled with hope, made possible through the power of welcome.

Above

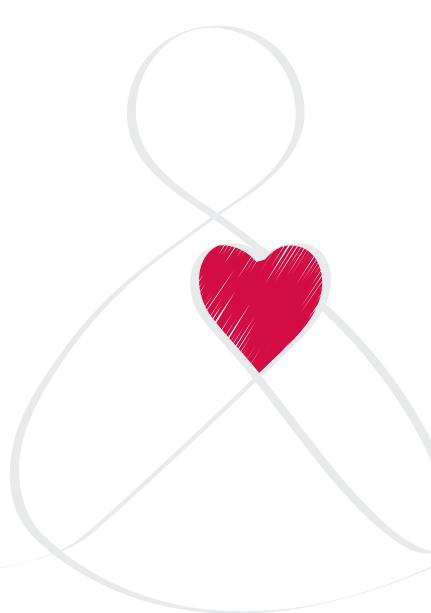
The Marrickville Refugee Welcome Group is engaging with the local Marrickville community to gain support and raise awareness about the CRISP project.







For this Talking Mission feature, we invited long-time supporters Barry and Deirdre – a dynamic retired couple whose lives are rich with purpose, family and faith – to talk about their journey with us. Deeply involved in local Church initiatives, they have been walking with us for more than a decade. Beyond participating in parish appeals, Barry and Deirdre have travelled with us on Adults Immersions to visit projects in Myanmar and Cambodia. They are soon to visit Mongolia to learn more about the progress of the Don Bosco Caring Center project and to reconnect with Br Andrew Tran Le Phuong, who they first met in Melbourne a year ago.



When did you first hear about Catholic Mission and how long have you been supporting our work?

We would say 10 years ago. We first became aware of Catholic Mission through the annual appeals at our local church. We've supported Catholic Mission and other church-based organisations for a while. What appeals to us is the focus on helping people overseas, where there's much greater need. While Australia's relatively well off, places like Cambodia and Myanmar just don't have the same opportunities. Catholic Mission gives those communities real support.

You both travelled to Cambodia and Barry, you also visited Myanmar with Catholic Mission. How did seeing the projects firsthand impact you?

It really brought it all to life. The poverty was confronting, the children came from shacks, yet arrived at school immaculately dressed, happy and eager to learn. We were completely immersed, staying in the school and joining classes. The children's determination was incredible. Many go on to university or trade schools, and some even repay the funds Catholic Mission provided to help them become self-sufficient. It's not just handouts; it's building sustainable communities.

What inspired you most about the work Catholic Mission is doing on the ground?

The commitment to empowering communities, not just helping people survive but helping them thrive. Training people to run their own programs, engaging governments respectfully and operating within complex political environments, all that impressed us deeply. It also helped us better understand the role of missionaries by seeing their dedication on the ground - it changed our perception entirely.

Can you share one special moment that has stayed with you?

While staying in Cambodia, every morning the kindergarten kids would greet us with big smiles. They were so happy and well cared for. During the New Year, the students performed traditional Cambodian dance and theatre. The whole school participated. It was joyful and meaningful, a strong expression of culture and community. Even local government officials attended, showing real support. Catholic Mission is clearly seen as a model for public education in that area. The children are committed and take pride in their school, even coming in on Saturdays to clean. That kind of ownership sets them up as future leaders.

How has experiencing this firsthand influenced your faith journey?

It's restored our confidence in the Church. With all the scandals and criticism, it's easy to become disillusioned. But this showed us that the Church still has a vital role in improving lives and leading with values. The Church should support the poor and disadvantaged, and that's what Catholic Mission does. That's real leadership.

How would you encourage others to live out their faith in action here in Australia?

There are many ways like volunteering with organisations in the community. Even small efforts can make a difference. For those who can't volunteer, giving one-off gifts or becoming regular givers, or even learning more about financially sponsoring a specific project or initiative is equally valuable. We'd encourage people to consider faith-based organisations when they give. They're value-driven and make a lasting impact.

Talking Mission invites guests to share their own missionary experience and how they turn Mission into action.

Get inspired today!

Learn more



Below:
Barry and Deirdre
during an Adult
Immersion in
Cambodia.





Above: Children in Zambia wearing their Socktober bracelets.

Faith Begins at Home: Make Socktober a Family Project

During World Mission Month, youth across Australia are invited to take part in Socktober by creating sockballs made from recycled materials. More than just a simple ball, these sockballs are a symbolic gesture that immerses participants in a powerful experience. Through fun, soccer-themed activities, students are invited to reflect on the daily realities of children in vulnerable communities.

Soccer is a game played by children around the world – in schoolyards, parks, courtyards and the streets. Yet many of those children do not have access to the perfectly round, leather balls that Australian kids often use. Instead, they are resourceful, crafting their own balls using whatever is available: cloth scraps, plastic bags and string or ribbons. While these homemade balls may lack the bounce of a manufactured one, they never lack in providing fun.

The hands-on activity of making a sockball, combined with online mission pack resources, gives participants insight into the challenges others face each day and inspires them to respond with compassion and solidarity. Socktober becomes a tangible way

for students to take action, by raising awareness and fundraising to support communities in need.

This year, Socktober is making a real difference in the Diocese of Mpika, Zambia, where families are experiencing a devastating hunger crisis. The severe drought in 2024, coupled with economic hardship, has plunged the region into an ongoing cycle of instability. With only 175 grams of maize allocated per person per day – half the amount needed for survival – many families are unable to meet basic nutrition needs and children's health is at risk.

To break this cycle, Bishop Edwin Mulandu launched the Maize Mill Project: a locally driven initiative promoting food security, economic dignity and care for creation. Beyond building a sustainable economy led by women, the project provides for the whole community by ensuring local businesses and families can buy maize at a fair price.

This holistic initiative supports the entire community, ensuring no one is left behind and that no one suffers from hunger. With your support, we can help this community rebuild through a sustainable farming program.

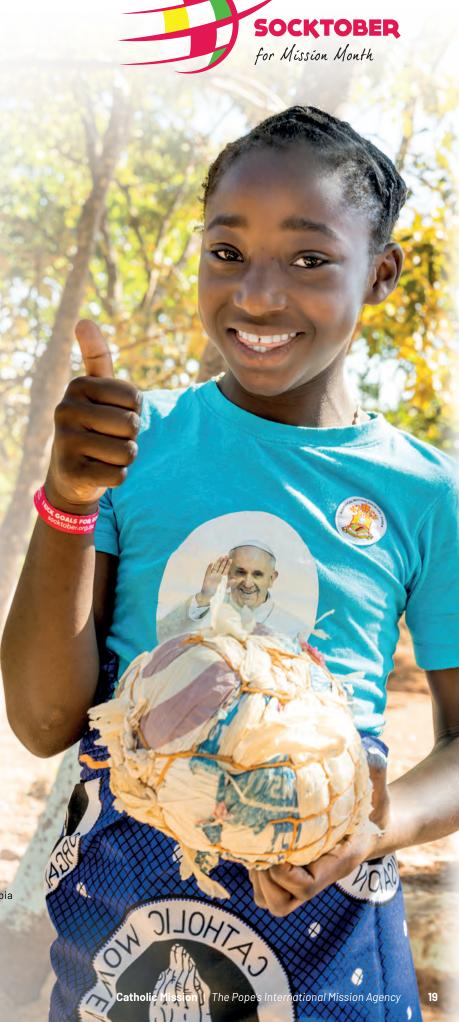
Through Socktober, students and young people are empowered to make a real difference and to stand in solidarity with their brothers and sisters around the world. The Socktober platform is the perfect starting point. Easy to navigate for youth, parents and relatives, it offers a secure way to fundraise and engage in meaningful activities that stimulate the hands, head and heart. It offers an invitation to make it a family project that brings faith to life and extends God's love to those in need.

Join us this Socktober and be part of lasting change.

To get involved or learn more, visit <u>www.socktober.org.au</u>

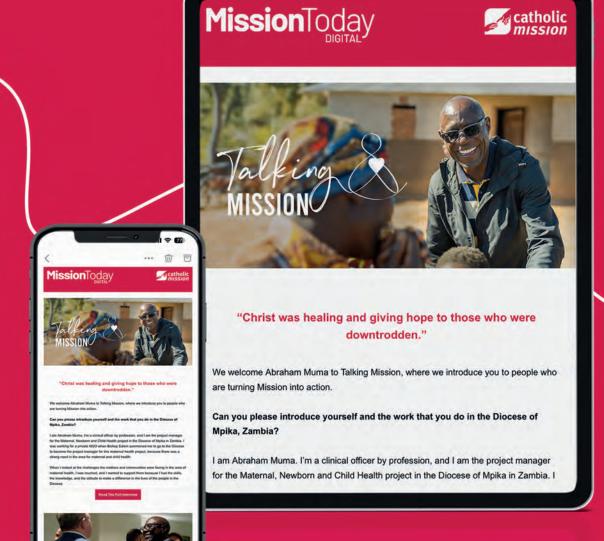


and show the world what young changemakers can do!



A young soccer enthusiast in Zambia holding a sockball made from recycled materials.

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