SUMMARY

The global and tragic conflict of World War I between the world’s most powerful countries – each with Christian heritage and influence – represented a step backward for the world and for mission. Pope Benedict XV asserted an alternative approach to mission in the world, so that it would be cleansed of any colonial desires and avoid the nationalistic and expansionistic aims that had proved so disastrous. In so doing, he recalled the great Apostles of the Gospel to remind Catholics that the goal of mission is a spiritual one. It is not interested in power, resources, or achievement. It is to be carried out in a selfless way.

Maximum Illud speaks directly to bishops and superiors to communicate the necessity of proper preparation for engaging foreign cultures – including learning foreign languages – and the need to educate and form local clergy. The letter also suggests, however, that mission activity is not only for missionaries who travel to foreign lands. All Catholics are invited (and obligated) to participate in various forms.

Maximum Illud CALLS FOR...

- Overcoming the tendency to emphasize differences and to provoke conflict.
- Transcending national boundaries with prophetic spirit.
- Resisting the temptation of self-referential ecclesial introversion, cultural pessimism and nostalgia for a golden era of the past.
- Instilling the trust and hope that love defeats fear and death.
- Mission leaders to commit themselves to creating new missionary efforts and methods, and training more skilled pastoral missionaries.
- Missionaries to aspire to live with humility and a great trust in God to facilitate the many new tasks that do appear during mission and ministry.
- All Catholics to commit themselves in available ways to support mission in the world. Above all, we are to pray for our brothers and sisters around the world.
- A truly universal perspective of mission Ad Gentes geared towards developing local churches and local leadership beyond the boundaries of Europe.

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