**Homily for Sunday 8th oct 2017** (in the Month of the World Mission)

My dear Brothers and Sisters in Jesus-Christ,

I consider it a God-given privilege to share with you my experience in the Mission diocese of Gulbarga. It’s amazing to see the efforts Missio makes to encourage the people share the Joy of the Gospel all over the world. My warmest thanks to Missio Switzerland.

Coming to my part of sharing, friends, I would like you to consider the beginning of this “Mission” we are talking about. Who began this Mission ? Where did this begin ? We know it’s begun with our Lord Jesus himself, who in obedience to the will of the Father came to this world and laid down his life upon the cross and rose from the dead, that we may be freed from sin and death. God wants everyone to be saved. He wants everyone to know and experience His love, and for this Jesus commanded to his apostles : „ Go out into the whole world… and teach them all that I’ve said. Touched by his saving love, we are to go out and proclaim this love to all people… and being touched by this overwhelming experience of God’s love, the Apostles, martyrs and all the saints down the ages bore witness to His love and proclaimed the Good News with Word and Deeds. The Good News is becoming fruitful all over the world.

I am not a great missionary like them. I’m just an ordinary priest, a missionary today called to serve Gulbarga diocese as its Shepherd, trying my best to follow the Lord in his footsteps. It was my heart’s desire right from my youngest days to be a missionary. When I was just 4 years a priest, the bishop of Bangalore to which I belonged, one day told me his plans to adopt a new mission for the diocese, and that I should be the pioneer of this mission. With great struggle in my soul, trusting in the Lord, I said „Yes“ and the bishop accompanied me to this mission, popularly known as the „Bidar Mission“, a mission that was 1‘000 km away from Mangalore.

We hardly knew anyone in this place. Not knew how to begin, when to begin, but placing all our trust in God we began… meeting people everyday, everyday new people, travelling to places by walk or by bicycle. We just smiled at them, said „Namaste“ greetings… introduced ourselves, and soon some became our friends. It looked as though God is already present in them working for us… They invited us to their homes, their villages and asked us to preach the Word of God to them. Soon those who accepted the Lord in their heart were received into the catholic fold, a local christian community was born. As most of them were poor and illiterate, but rich in generosity of love, in faith, it was an arduous/difficult task for us to form them in faith. We took years to teach them and receive them in faith. In this process, our understanding of mission also changed. Poor and illiterate they were, undergoing several problems of life, they needed our help to come up in life, and therefore we started a „community building“ exercise involving ourselves in various social developmental educational activities – for all people irrespective of caste and creed. Our Mission was for all. Thus after 23 years of hard work, the stage was set for a new diocese. The new diocese was born at June 24, 2005 and they made me its first bishop. Today we are 8‘000 catholics, a team of 70 priests, 216 nuns and over 400 lay collaborators in different fields of our activity in the mission Praise the Lord ! “The harvest is rich indeed, but the labourers are few”. This is where we are.

Today we want our people to become Evangelisers, and we try our best to motivate and teach them to be so, that they may in turn proclaim God’s special love for them to all people around, to people of all religions. Today, it’s the month of the World Mission that has brought us together. There is mission in Gulbarga, in India, in all continents and in Switzerland. The Gospel of the day is inviting us, the church, the „Choice Vine“, to bear much fruit, and, as a community, be grateful to God for all his love and care and many blessings we’ve received, both spiritual and temporal, and bear much fruit. India and my diocese Gulbarga is grateful to all Europe, for the gift of faith it has received through the thousands of missionaries that came to our country. And it is our time, our turn to do our best to bear witness to the Lord and be Evangelisers ! May the Lord Jesus who united us today, and said „Behold I’ll be with you till the end of the world“ be with you and me as we gladly carry forward the Mission until the End.