

TAPE (DESS  
RHK) Glory be to the Fr. - to the Son - to the H. Sp.: as it was in the beginning, so be it now - forever. Amen

In his fascinating & brilliant TV serial, 'Civilisation', which you can now see in HK, Sir Kenneth Clarke made an observation which deserves a little examination, in connection with the keeping at this time every year of 'Mission Sunday'. Describing the position & importance of the Church in the early Middle Ages and its contribution to what he calls 'Civilisation', Sir Kenneth remarked on the regular practice of what we wd. call foreigners being made bishops of dioceses even in long Christian countries like England at the time: this internationalism, he said, is a sign of vitality and the importance people attach to the spheres in which it is practised. Foreigners are acceptable when there's an outward-looking life & vitality in a particular area of civilisation. The point is debatable, of course; and though a narrow nationalism in Christian life is not still to be praised or encouraged, the Church has been very keen in these last decades to have the government and arrangement of local affairs in the hands of local people, for reasons that are obvious - for the Church sent by Christ to be for all men must be really rooted in the different ways & cultures of the different people, if it is to be truly theirs and not an importation from some foreign country or culture. In recent years, in most of the Christian churches, there has been a lot of rethinking and examination of what the role and mission of the Church is in the modern world, both in what are sometimes called the 'old' Christian countries and in places where the number of Christians is <sup>a</sup> quite small minority - there was one such consultation here in HK earlier this year, you may remember, at which the Governor in his address to the meeting seemed to put forward his idea of the Church's mission.

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Mission Sunday, as we've known it, grew from a different outlook and understanding of the Church's role in areas that were traditionally thought of as non-Christian. It was a child of its time, but the world has changed a lot since then, socially, politically, economically, culturally, and even religiously. So, <sup>as</sup> we've been finding a different concept of the mission of the Church (no longer merely a question of personnel & finance for 'foreign missions', the personnel being pretty exclusively priests, brothers & nuns), we've got to find a fuller meaning for the continuing observance of Mission Sunday. The greatest change, perhaps, has been the wakening realisation that everywhere the Church is (which means wherever Christians are), it is a mission as well as having a mission. "As the Father has sent me, so I also send you". Wherever we are, we are sent by God, to be witnesses to Him for the people we live with. The witnesses that some people have given here have been officially recognised and held up as an example in Christian living & dying for the rest of us - these are the people called martyrs (it's the same word as 'witness'). So it's a happy coincidence that the martyrs who are to be canonised on Sunday next by the Pope are all ~~from~~ <sup>from</sup> a country that isn't a foreign mission, and died in their own country - the 40 English martyrs. It's not necessary to get into polemics about this: all of them died for the faith they believed in, and tried to live, and we can ask their intercession for the mission of the Church throughout the world today, and for ourselves that each of us may so live our Christian lives that we give witness to others of the love of God for ever more. In our prayer today, the, let's not forget all the men and women, not necessarily priests, nuns & brothers, who give their lives, their work, their talents

and abilities to make the mission of the Church in society more effective, especially in places far away from their own homes & families. And for a prayer in music, let's listen to the ~~Mass~~ <sup>Gloria</sup> ~~Mass~~, from an African Mass, from the Cathedral Coyo, sung by a choir of 70 African school-boys. MUSIC - PRAYERS.

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(Ghana)

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MP 135 p26.