

Celebrating Extraordinary Missionary Month October 2019...

Tuesday, 8 October 2019

Tuesday of the 27th Week of Ordinary Time: Jon 3:1-10; Lk 10:38-42

BE FOCUSED ON YOUR MISSION

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Today's readings present a few models for mission, which we see in Jonah, Jesus, Martha and Mary. Each character has something important to teach us.

Jonah was so reluctant to take up the mission that God entrusted upon him. How often we are like Jonah, ready to find excuses to avoid our missionary duty.

V3 says: "Nineveh was an extraordinarily large city: it took three days to cross it." The world to be evangelized also seems enormous to us and we are faced with seemingly impenetrable unbelief. Often we too are afraid of the mission ahead of us and find it is 'too much' for me.

The preaching of the prophets over many centuries had not been enough to convert the people of Israel, but here the preaching of a single day is enough to change the hearts of the despised Ninevites. This is the wonder of God: he always surprises us in our pastoral expectations.

Jesus 'entered' a village.. Martha 'welcomed' him. This entering is very important for a missionary. Every missionary has a challenge of this entering ahead of him/her. Enter into the house of people not just the building of the house, but their lives and also into their hearts, and finally create a space for Jesus in their lives. Teach them how to 'welcome' the lord into their lives and into the 'spaces' of their lives. That inevitably necessitates his/ her readiness to open to the one who knocks (Rev 3:20).

There are a few words in the conversation between Jesus and Martha that needs special attention.

V 40 says "But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made." So the problem that affects Martha was that she was 'distracted'. And the Greek word used for that is *perispaō*, which means a state of being pulled back from something. The reply of the Lord is that "you are worried and upset about many things..." (v. 41). And the Greek word used is *merimnaō*, which means a state where the mind is filled with so many kinds of thoughts. So the problem with Martha at that moment is her worries about many things and the 'better part' that Mary chose was that she kept away all her distractions and focused on the Lord alone. That could be the reason why Sirach 11:10 says "My child, don't get involved in too many things. If you try to do too much, you will suffer for it. You won't be able to finish your work, and you won't be able to get away from it either." This could be a pit fall in a missionary life, the distraction of so many things which are not so important as the main thing, but which still are capable enough to take away the attention from the main one. When the missionaries forget the fact of witnessing Christ through words and deeds and rather focus on things which are less important, they also come to the state of 'distracted Marthas'.

The lone problem with Martha was of course not that she didn't sit at the foot of the Lord, but she was still anxious of many things even when the solution for all anxieties was with her, at her home. Jesus is not rebuking her for the work she was doing, because it was the responsibility of the host to take care of the guest well. But

her mind which was supposed to be immersed in the guest (Jesus) but got immersed in her anxieties and that was her botch. She couldn't anchor in Jesus, and that was her failure. Similar situation may arise in our lives as well, when we lose our focus of life. We are also surrounded by many such distracting factors, of which we are anxious of even when we are with the Lord in prayer or celebrating the Liturgy. So Jesus reminds us to cast all our anxieties* and to focus on the one who is the solution to the problems of life. Mary was focused on her mission, of sitting with Jesus, listening to him and making him comfortable. But Martha was not focused on her mission providing something delicious for the Lord. Let our missions be focused on what is important, because "only one thing is important." (V. 42a)

* Psalm 55:22, Isaiah 41:13, Matthew 6:25, Philippians 4:6-7, 1 Peter 5:7

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