

Celebrating Extraordinary Missionary Month October 2019...

Mission Sunday Homily

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Over one billion Catholics all over the world observe this Sunday as "World Mission Sunday." This annual celebration of Mission Sunday gives us a chance to reflect on the importance of mission for the life of the Church. It reminds us that we are one with the Church around the world and that we are all committed to carrying on the mission of Christ.

The readings this Sunday remind us the challenges of the missionaries. The first reading explains about the servant as giving "his life as an offering for sin." The prophecy was realized in Jesus who lived and died for others. The second reading tells us that Jesus responded to the call from his Father to be the mediator for the people. It speaks of a high priest who sympathizes with us in our weakness. The gospel explains how Jesus accomplished his mission of saving mankind by becoming the Suffering Servant. Jesus challenges us to become great by serving others: "Whoever wishes to be great must be a servant." We need to get out of our comfort zone and see the other side of the world.

As you know, before coming to the United States I served 9 years in Kenya, East Africa. In the year 2013 I spent five months in Kenya. I think this World Mission Sunday may be appropriate to share with you my own personal experiences. My pastoral ministry in Kenya helped me to love African mission.

We may not realize how fortunate we are. We have a house to sleep in. We have hospitals and medicine when we become sick. We have nice roads to travel. We have enough water to drink. We have schools with modern technologies. We have hundreds of restaurants to eat our favorite food. We have computers and other modern electronic instruments. Can you think of a day without electricity? If the church doesn't have heating on a cold day how will we react? If there is no enough light in the church what will I say?

The village I was for five months in Kenya there had nothing of the above mentioned modern facilities. The schools had no concrete floor. They had to sprinkle water every morning on the floor to keep the dust down. There were no benches, computers, etc., in the school. They had to walk a long distance to get drinking water. There was no good restaurant to eat. They ate almost everyday beans and corn. There was no hospital in the area. When they got sick they had to go to a pharmacy to buy medicine. Some of them had no money to buy medicine and they died. Many elderly people and single mothers came to church to get food every week. They have no electricity. Couple of churches had no roof. They prayed every Sunday. They have no pews to sit on. I have seen all these and experienced. Sometimes people ask me what is my favorite food. My answer always is, I eat whatever doesn't bite me back. I have seen people starving to death. There was no choice for them to eat what they like. They had to eat what was available.

On this mission Sunday let us pray for the missionaries around the world. Jesus told his disciples about his suffering and death. We all are missionaries in one way or other. We need more missionaries today. We need to pray for more vocation to priestly and religious life. We may not be able to go to Africa or another country but we can do mission in our neighborhood. When we meet our friends try to share with them our faith. If you recognize somebody in the community who doesn't come to church invite them. We have plenty of missions in our families and neighborhood. The most important thing is not the gospel we preach, but the life we live. This is how the early Christians evangelized. Their gentiles used to say: "See how these Christians love one another."

In today's Gospel, Jesus relates service with suffering. Suffering and service go together. A happy family is the result of true sacrifice and service. The husband or wife sacrifices convenience, comfort and time. There can be no success without sacrifice. We are challenged to drink the cup of Jesus by laying down our lives in humble and sacrificial service for others, just as Jesus did.

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