

Celebrating Extraordinary Missionary Month October 2019...

Tuesday, 1 October 2019

Be Like a Child: Core Identity of a Missionary

Fr. Jose Nandhikkara CMI

Today, following the call of our Holy Father, Pope Francis, we begin the extra-ordinary mission month, with the motto - *Baptized and Sent: The Church of Christ on Mission in the World*. Holy Father wants us "first to rediscover the missionary dimension of our faith in Jesus Christ, a faith graciously bestowed on us in baptism. We received this gift freely and we share it freely (refer Mt 10:8), without excluding anyone." Pope reminds us that "every baptized man and woman is a mission" and that "The person who preaches God must be a man of God." In His words, "People in love never stand still: they are drawn out of themselves; they are attracted and attract others in turn; they give themselves to others and build relationships that are life-giving." The question that I should address is the one the Risen Lord asked St Peter - "Do you love me more than these?" (Jn 21:15). Let's answer with Peter and with all the saints that we love the Lord, and follow the advice of St John: "let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth" (1 Jn 3:18). "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (Jn 13:35).

Today, we celebrate the Feast of Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face, who is the Patroness of all Missionaries and the Missions, and Doctor of the Church. It is surprising how a nun who lived just nine years in a cloistered Carmelite convent, who never went to any missions and died when she was just 24 years could become the Patroness of all Missionaries and the Missions. The answer is given by today's Gospel, "Be like a child" - humble and loving. That was the secret of Saint Thérèse - her little way - be like a child. She wrote so beautifully: "In spite of my littleness, I would like to enlighten souls as did the Prophets and the Doctors. I have the vocation of the Apostles. I would like to travel over the whole earth to preach your Name and to plant your glorious cross on all soil. But ... one mission alone would not be sufficient for me, I would want to preach the Gospel on all the five continents simultaneously and even to the most remote isles. I would be a missionary, not for a few years only, but from the beginning of creation until the consummation of the ages." Saint Thérèse in her own unique "little way" - humble and loving - prayed and sacrificed unceasingly for the missions.

What makes a missionary are not words and speech, not even skills and actions, but the heart - the heart that is set so passionately on "knowing and loving Jesus and to make him known and loved." That was the motto of Saint Thérèse. At a young age of 14, as she praying in the Cathedral of Lisieux, she was moved by the cry of the Lord from the Cross - I thirst. She knew, it was a thirst for the salvation of souls. Little Flower wrote later: "I was resolved to remain in spirit at the foot of the Cross and to receive the divine dew. I understood I was then to pour it out upon souls... I wanted to give my Beloved to drink and I felt myself consumed with a thirst for souls."

"Today too," the Pope writes in his message for the World Mission day that "the Church needs men and women who, by virtue of their baptism, respond generously to the call to leave behind home, family, country, language and local Church, and to be sent forth to the nations, to a world not yet transformed by the sacraments of Jesus Christ and his holy Church. By proclaiming God's word, bearing witness to the Gospel and celebrating the life of the Spirit, they summon to conversion, baptize and offer Christian salvation, with respect for the freedom of each person and in dialogue with the cultures and religions of the peoples to whom they are sent." Let's us participate in this great mission to wake up the world by way of attraction - by being like a child, in humility and love - like Little Flower the Patroness of

Missionaries and Missions, and pray for her intercession for us and for all our missionaries to be committed in our vocation to be missionaries of the Lord and the joy of His Gospel.

Published by

CMI General Department of Evangelization and Pastoral Ministry