

*Celebrating Extraordinary Missionary Month October 2019...*

**Thursday, 3 October 2019**

**2 Tim 3:1-7; Mt 8:1-4**

Augustine Mlavarayil CMI

Today's gospel passage presents Jesus coming down from the mountain and healing a leper. "Going up to the mountain" for being with His father was the routine of Jesus. The biblical image of someone being on the mountain always refers to "being in the presence of the Lord" or "Staying connected to the Divine." All of us have received an invitation to be with Jesus on the mountain and to be His missionaries to proclaim the Gospel and to heal the sick. Our Call is to stay connected to the divine always. The Call narrative of Mark 3: 13- 18 clearly points out the two aspects of any vocation: to be with Him and to be sent out. The message is very clear. Someone who is not with the Lord does not have the credibility of taking up the mission of the Lord. To be with the Lord is mandatory for a disciple to be sent out. This challenges us to renew our commitment to be with the Lord. Jesus who goes up to the mountain to converse with His father and comes down to heal His people depicts the ideal body language of any missionary.

While coming down from the mountain, a leper approached, did him homage, and said, "Lord, if you wish, you can make me clean." The leper's prayer represents the cry of God's people who are struggling to swim against the struggles of life. The gesture of Jesus stretching out His hands and touching the leper shall be the ideal mind set of the missionaries. As chosen by Jesus our Lord to continue His mission, every missionary is obliged to choose always the option of healing God's people who are suffering with any form of leprosy. Leprosy of our time could be physical, mental as well as spiritual. This gospel text is a gentle reminder for us to stay connected to the divine on daily basis to eradicate any sort of leprosy in the society, whether it is physical, mental or spiritual.

The fate of a leper was made worse by the requirement that he/she be isolated from all healthy people. The infected person was required to shout "Unclean! Unclean!" when approached by a healthy person. "He shall dwell alone. Outside of the camp shall be his dwelling" (Lev 13:45-46). In short, the leper was distanced from the society. In such a context, Jesus touching the leper is the pure expression of his compassionate heart. Jesus understood the mental pains and the agony of the leper in front of him caused by the social alienation. Jesus understood that the leper is in need of a loving touch from his part. He knew that nobody might have touched him after his mother made him bath in his child hood. And in fact, the loving touch of Jesus Christ turned out to be a miraculous healing touch. The ability to understand the mental pains and agonies of the people caused by the various social systems or by the different family background would be a trait that could be imbibed from the model of Jesus, the first missionary. The concluding statement of Jesus after healing is worth reflecting, "See that you tell no one, but show yourself to the priest and offer the gift that Moses prescribed." Every missionary activity shall be accompanied by such a noble gesture of not publicizing oneself. St. Paul puts it very clearly, "For it is not those who commend themselves that are approved, but those whom the Lord commends."

For this missionary pattern of being with the lord and being His messenger, we have the best model in the person of our beloved founder St. Kuriakose Elias Chavara. As Fr. Cyriac Kanichai would explain, "Ascending to the heavenly father and descending to His people is the heart and soul of Chavara Spirituality. We are the care takers of such a great spiritual heritage. It is the God consciousness or Abba Consciousness that determines our CMI ness.

*Published by*

CMI General Department of Evangelization and Pastoral Ministry