

Celebrating Extraordinary Missionary Month October 2019...

Saturday, 19 October 2019

Lk 12:8-12

True Missionary Witnessing Involves Liberation from Hypocrisy

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As we are on the threshold of the mission Sunday in this missionary month, the passage for our reflection leads us to meditate on the true witness of a missionary disciple. Through verses 8 and 9 Jesus reminds, what should be the attitude of a follower or a missionary disciple. According to the Pope Francis, 'the mission of the Church is not only for priests and religious. While some of the baptized are called to serve in the mission as priests and religious, everyone is called to witness to the person and message of Jesus Christ in the daily tasks of our lives.' It means a true follower of Christ is a missionary and he has the duty to witness Jesus Christ by his or her life. For this witness, as he continues, 'one primarily should have personal encounter with Jesus. What should flow from the evangelizers is their personal encounter with the saving love of Jesus.' Unless we have the personal encounter with Jesus, we will just be the namesake followers of Christ and our life will be filled with hypocrisy. The personal encounter with Jesus should empower us to powerfully witness the values of Jesus in our daily life.

One day I was travelling to our own fathers staying in a different diocese through the public means of transportation. I was sitting at the extreme back seat of the sprinter and was busy in chatting through WhatsApp. As we were waiting for the sprinter to be full, there came two people who sat in the front seat. As they looked back, they saw me and they shouted, hello Fr. Jomi, how are you? I responded. They were the parents of the students of our school. I didn't notice them until they greeted me. Now the one who was sitting beside me was a protestant pastor wearing his collar shirt. He never knew I was a priest before they greeted me. He asked me why I don't wear the cassock as it is my official habit. Then I said for the convenient sake we don't use our habit during our journeys. Then he said don't deny Jesus for the convenient sake. Then he quoted with Jesus words of today's passage, "Whoever denies me before others will be denied before the angels of God." It was one of the few occasions when I was embarrassed by a protestant pastor.

Then Jesus goes on to speak about the sin against Holy Spirit, which will not be forgiven. Speaking against the Son is also wrong, but with repentance there can be reconciliation. According to the Biblical scholars, "to sin against the Spirit is to go against the truth itself." This was basically the sin of the scribes and Pharisees. They not only criticized Jesus, but they locked themselves in to a situation where they rejected any openness to the truth.

Those who denied the truth, that grace coming through the faith is the source of salvation are in danger of committing the sin against the Holy Spirit. Through their arrogance and self-righteousness, they closed the way for repenting over their sins and had no hope for forgiveness because they had no desire for forgiveness. The sin against the Holy Spirit is not a one-time act of sin but a series of sin or the process of sin which denied the Spirit of God, work in a person. They pretend to be holy before

others as the Pharisees did but inside, they are full of filth. They pretend to be abiding by the teaching of God but actually they are not. They want to appear to be a holy but actually they are not holy from within. They don't respond to the promptings of the Spirit to be true selves; instead, they become stubborn and refuse to move away from the sinful ways. Gradually, their conscience dies out and the promptings of the Spirit cease to exist. They will not be forgiven because they do not seek to be forgiven because they have no desire to be forgiven. They die in their sins and stubbornness, refusing to repent and receive forgiveness. This is the problem with the hypocrites and that is why Jesus was warning the Pharisees the sin against the Holy Spirit.

A true follower of Christ cannot commit an unforgivable sin because Christ has already forgiven all his sins. As the true followers of Christ let us always have a personal encounter of Jesus and that will always help us to keep the promptings of the Spirit intact and always open to repentance and forgiveness. May we never succumb to hypocrisy which would endanger our soul to be moved away from the presence of the Lord. Thus, our witnessing be complete as a true missionary disciple. May the good Lord strengthen us to be faithful to him and to be ourselves. Amen.

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