

*Celebrating Extraordinary Missionary Month October 2019...*

## **20 October 2019**

Mission Sunday

Lk 18:1-8

Fr. George Vellaringattu CMI, Peru

Today we celebrate the Mission Sunday. I remember those years of 1980s. When I was a Sunday school student, we used to go from house to house to collect things, money, agricultural products to help the missions. This helped me to have a missionary orientation in my mind as a young boy. Now being a missionary in this faraway land I thank Our Lord for giving me the missionary vocation. Today I remember with gratitude all those who have helped me to foster my vocation: my parents, brothers and sisters, parish priests, nuns, my superiors, my formators, my friends, and all those who pray for me still to continue this ministry.

I remember a story that will help us to have a deeper understanding of our role and mission. An old man was around planting small fruit trees. Some asked him when these trees would bear fruit. He replied: Oh, probably many years after I am gone from this earth. So then, why to plant trees when he won't be around to enjoy the fruits? His reply was this: When I came into this world, I didn't find this world without any fruit trees. I enjoyed the fruits. Now I plant these fruit trees for those who will come after me, just as those who have done before me.

When we reflect upon the words of the old man, we will also come to a deeper understanding of our faith and mission. We will come to see that the faith we have had been built upon and handed down to us by the earlier generation. What we have received, we too must build it up and hand it over to the next generation.

Today we are remembering and celebrating the missionary vocation of the Church. Pope Francis has convened an Extraordinary Missionary Month for this October 2019, with the theme "Baptized and sent: the Church of Christ in Mission in the world." With this Extraordinary Missionary Month, the Holy Father wants to awaken the conscience of the *ad gentes* mission, and resume with new impulse the responsibility of proclaiming the Gospel of all.

"This missionary mandate touches us personally: I am a mission, always; you are a mission, always; every baptized man and woman is a mission. 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. As far as God's love is concerned, no one is useless or insignificant. Each of us is a mission to the world, for each of us is the fruit of God's love. Even if parents can betray their love by lies, hatred and infidelity, God never takes back his gift of life. From eternity he has destined each of his children to share in his divine and eternal life (see Eph 1:3-6)" (from the message of Pope Francis for world mission day 2019).

In our Parish we began this extraordinary mission month with a solemn celebration. Nearly 100 young people of our parish have received the commission to become missionary disciples of Jesus and to evangelize the communities where they live, go to school or work. Jesus sends us all to spread his word to the ends of the world. The true missionary disciples are those who through their lives give a constant and steadfast witness to the Gospel. St Francis of Assisi used to tell his followers: "Preach the gospel and if necessary use words". The lives we lead are the key to our being true missionary disciples. Through our lives we are invited to bear witness to the faith in the Risen Lord.

Today's readings remind us the need to pray always and not to lose heart. God calls us to turn to Him always and pray constantly, as Moses, widow in the gospel. In today's first reading, God demonstrated to the Israelites that He was the one in charge of their lives, history and circumstances. Of course, their success depended totally on Him. As long as Moses' hands were lifted up to God in prayers, the Israelites soldiers were victorious in battle. This reading reminds us that our victory in life depends on God. It also reminds us that the solution to our daily struggles and quest have both a spiritual and physical dimension. In all circumstances of life, we must constantly abide in God's presence with our minds and hearts lifted up to him in prayers. Like Moses and the psalmist, if we continuously lift up our minds and eyes to God in prayers, "Our help will definitely come from the Lord, who made heaven and earth." This is because He never fails.

In today's gospel, Jesus further underscores the importance of continuous prayer. Through the parable, Jesus teaches us to be consistent and persevere in our prayer at all times. We must never be tired of praying, because God is never tired of listening to us. On this special day let us pray for all the Christians who are being persecuted for their faith, especially those who are active in sharing the gospel. May the Lord give the courage and strength to withstand all the trials and continue to bear witness to the faith in Jesus Christ.

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