

Celebrating Extraordinary Missionary Month October 2019...

Sunday, 20 October 2019

29th Week in Ordinary Time

Readings: Isaiah 2: 1-5; 1 Tim 2: 1-8; Mt 28: 16-20

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Reflection

In the first reading we witness *"The word that Isaiah, son of Amoz, saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem."* In chapter 1 Isaiah graphically laid out what he had seen: violence, bribery, unfaithfulness, desolation, trampling on the poor. There are brief interruptions as God calls for repentance and offers glimpses of hope, but they are drowned out by these pictures of violence and rebellion. Then Chapter 2 opens as though Isaiah is starting all over again or rather God is. What Isaiah sees is not taking place now, but "in the days to come." People of every nation will stream to Mt. Zion, including those who were enemies of Israel and Judah. God's instruction will go forth from Jerusalem; God will judge between the nations. **The people will be transformed by this teaching and preaching of the prophet. Here is the relevance of this reading for our mission Sunday celebration today that we should also engage in the prophetic mission to engage with the social and political situations.** In the second reading St. Paul's warns us against false preachers and teachers. **This gives caution to all the missionaries "not to teach any different doctrine and not occupy themselves with any false myths and ... speculations."** Today's Gospel reading is the "final commissioning" of the Lord. The core element of which is "teach them to obey all that I commanded them." Hence a **missionary is not his own, rather he himself is a "mission" gifted with a "self" to represent Jesus Christ Himself.**

Billy Graham:

William Franklin Graham Jr. was an American evangelist, a prominent evangelical Christian figure, and an ordained Southern Baptist minister who became well-known internationally in the late 1940s. One of his biographers has placed him "among the most influential Christian leaders" of the 20th century. As a preacher, he held large indoor and outdoor rallies with sermons that were broadcast on radio and television; some were still being re-broadcast into the 21st century. He is being called as the "Pastor of the World" when he died at the age of 99 years on February 21, 2018. He could travel more than 150 nations and preach the word of God to millions of people.

Once he was preaching to a huge audience and by the end of his service a mother came to him and said: Pastor Billy, thanks a lot for your wonderful preaching and healing service. I really got inspired and got a revelation from God that I should be preaching the word of God. Pastor Billy was so happy to hear it and told her that he is so happy for her. Then she said: But there is a problem that I have seven children, I am confused. How can I leave them and go to the outer world to preach the Lord. Then Billy Graham said: **Dear Mam, I was happy when I heard that you got an inspiration to be a preacher. But I am happier to hear that God has not only given inspiration to preach but also give you a congregation in your home itself.**

Universal Mission to Preach the Universal Saviour:

All Christians are commissioned to take up the mission of the Lord. Baptism enables and equips one to be in the Grace of God to take various ways of missions in tune with the Church. Sometimes we have a misconception that mission work is something we do “outside” our home, community and country. Our real mission begins in our home itself. Mission is at the heart of our identity as a people of faith – we are a people who are sent out, sent to make Jesus Christ known in our world. On this day the universal nature of the church is particularly obvious as all celebrate Mission Sunday wherever we may be. All members of the Church are sent to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ. Each individual and community is invited to reflect on what it means to be a missionary. How are we to become the Missionary Disciples that Pope Francis asks us to become in his Encyclical “The Joy of the Gospel”?

Joy is a very rich word – as a mnemonic it can be broken into three words that best describe: **J** for Jesus; **O** for Others and **Y** for You.

The World Mission Sunday

This Sunday is a day set aside for the Catholic Church throughout the world to publicly renew its commitment to the missionary movement. This annual observance was instituted 93 years ago in 1926 by a Papal decree issued by Pope Pius XI. Every year since then, the universal Church has dedicated the month of October to reflection on and prayer for the missions. On World Mission Sunday, Catholics gather to celebrate the Eucharist and to contribute to a collection for the work of evangelization around the world. This annual celebration gives us a chance to reflect on the importance of mission work 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, however different our situations may be. This year we have an extra emphasis on this day since our present Pope has announced this month as an “extraordinary missionary month.”

Church and Her Missionary Nature

Christianity is a missionary religion. Vatican Council II gave special emphasis to the missionary nature of the Church. Jesus, being the head of church, is the first missionary who came to world through incarnation and revealed to us the mysteries of the Father and the Holy Spirit. He came to us with the message of God’s forgiving love and redeeming intervention with a sinful humanity. Thus, the evangelizing mission of the Church is essentially the announcement of God’s love, mercy, forgiveness, and salvation as these are revealed to mankind through the life, death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ our Lord. What are ways a Christian can be an effective missionary? May be we can identify three major ways here: By our **witnessing**, by our **prayers**, by our **preaching and teaching** and by our **financial support**.

- **Life Witness:** As St. Francis of Assisi said once, “Preach the gospel always and use words if necessary.” This is the most important and effective way of preaching, namely, by an exemplary Christian life. Mr. Gandhi used to say: “My life is my message.” He often challenged the Christian missionaries to observe the “apostolate of the rose.” A rose doesn’t preach. It simply radiates its fragrance and attracts everyone to it by its irresistible beauty. Hence, the most important thing is not the Gospel we preach, but the life we live. The true missionary disciples in our time are those who through their lives give constant and often silent but steadfast witness to the Gospel of Joy and Love.

They may not engage in dramatic gestures or travel very far but through their lives of witness they fulfil the advice.

- **Prayers:** Be patrons of missions by your continuous and committed prayers for the missionaries around the world. Within the convent walls St. Therese of Lissieux intensely prayed for the missionaries which eventually made her the patron saint of missionaries. All of us cannot be around the world doing direct missionary activities. However, all of us can be prayers warriors for the missionaries. Pope Benedict reminds us, *“The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few”, the Lord said; “pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest” (Lk 10: 2).*
- **Preaching and Teaching:** *“For when I preach the gospel, I cannot boast, since I am compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!” (1Cor 9:16).* Teaching is one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. *“We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift . . . is teaching, then teach” (Romans 12:6-7).* In this context, *teaching* refers to the God-given ability to explain God’s Word; the teacher has the supernatural ability to clearly instruct and communicate knowledge, specifically the doctrines of the faith and truths of the Bible (1 Corinthians 12:27-29).
- **Charity:** Millions of poor and illiterate people around the world are being helped by the generosity of committed Christians around the world. You can be a missionary by extending monetary hands to numerous mission areas around the world. If some of us economically blessed by God that itself should inspire us to be generous and gratefully charitable to the less privileged. The use of expensive modern media of communication is often necessary to bring Christ’s message of love and liberation more effectively to non-Christians in the modern world.

Early Christian Model of Evangelization: Four Dimensions Lived Out

Outsiders looked at the early Christian community and amazed saying, “See how these Christians love one another.” The Christ they recognized and accepted was the Christ who lived in each Christian.

- **They Witnessed: Acts 4: 33:** Their unity, love, and mutuality became exemplary. *“With great power they apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them.”*
- **They Prayed: Acts 2:46** – The early Church met daily *“with one accord in the temple.”*
- **They Preached: Acts 5:21, Acts 5:25, Acts 5:42** – The apostles continued teaching in the temple. **Acts 9:20** – immediately after his miraculous conversion, Paul *“preached the Christ in the synagogues”* in Damascus.
- **They Shared: Acts 4: 32:** All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had.

How effective are we in evangelizing the world?

An Interesting Fact

97% of the world has heard of Coca-Cola

72% of the world has seen a can of Coca-Cola

51% of the world has tasted a can of Coca-Cola

Coke has only been around 114 years (2019).

If God had given the task of world evangelization to the Coke company it would probably be done by now.

And Hell Broke Loose

Mark Twain used to tell a joke that he put a dog and a cat in a cage together as an experiment, to see if they could get along. They did. So, he put in a bird, a pig and a goat. They, too, got along fine after a few adjustments. Then he put in a Baptist, a Presbyterian, and a Catholic, and hell broke loose!

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