

Celebrating Extraordinary Missionary Month October 2019...

Sunday, 27 October 2019

Lk 18:9 -14

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As we are concluding the Month of Extra ordinary mission “Baptized and Sent” convoked by Pope Francis, we had a session of evaluation. Throughout the month we conducted mission in our Parish. During the month of August and September we prepared our lay missionaries how to organize the mission. In the beginning there was no good response from the people. On 20 October we had an open air mass in the central plaza of the village. More than 1000 faithful participated in that mass. But during the evaluation session we found the attitude of Pharisee and the attitude of tax collector. There was a group argued that they are living a very good Christian life participating the church they actively contribute to the church and there was a group saying that they have mistaken on many occasions, they had been participating some Pentecostal groups and they are really repented on that they have done.

In today’s readings Jesus asks us the question with what attitude you approach God? With an attitude of repentance or with an attitude of boasting?

The first reading from the book of Sirach states a truth which at first seem contradictory. He proclaims that God shows no partiality in answering prayer yet at the same time God always hears the humble prayer of those who cry out to God in need. The Lord always hear the authentic prayer. God responds all true prayers, may be not exactly as they are presented, but in a way which is a true blessing for the prayer –the one who prays. The Lord does not turn away from the sincere prayer of those who acknowledge their need before God, while those who selfishly request things from God do not always have their prayers answered, at least not in the way they want. The key to this paradoxical theme is in the attitude of the one who prays. Those who can honestly admit their need for God’s help will receive it, while those who only perfunctorily call upon God receive responses in proportion to their acknowledgment of God’s ability to help them.

The psalmist presents this same theme by pointing out that God confronts the evil doers while reaching out the divine hand to help those who seek God with sincere hearts. The Lord hears the cry –the pleading –of those who know that God is the only One Who can touch their lives with healing and wellbeing.

St. Paul concludes his pastoral letter to Timothy by reflecting on his ministry which is drawing to an end. The apostle is now old and tired, locked in a prison in Rome. He foresees the day on which he will leave this world. He takes stock of his life and turns his gaze towards the future. He is in prison and seems defeated. However, it does not matter to him as long as he is on Christ’s side and knows he has made a better choice.

He finished the race. He has won the race and is confident that the Lord will give him the laurel crown. He does not speak of merits, accumulated with efforts and fatigue, not the certainty of entrusting himself to the right person, to Christ Jesus who will not delude him nor those who “await his coming with love”.

He is confident that he has kept the faith to his commitments. For Paul, faith has been a long labour, a new birth, but conquered, was always maintained. He has led a life of integrity and brought to completion his apostolic mission to which Jesus called him.

His gaze is turned also to the future: "I am already being poured out like a libation, and the time for my departure is at hand". His fidelity to Christ will be validated by the greatest gesture of love: the gift of life. His death will be, like that of the Master, an expiatory sacrifice, and his blood "a libation: on the altar of faith.

In today's Gospel, Jesus presents a parable to those who proudly think that they are above the rest of humanity. According to Jesus' telling of the parable He addressed to the Pharisees themselves. He tells them once more where their pride will lead them. They will be excluded from the kingdom of God, because they will not admit or repent of their pride and their lack of charity. Instead of thanking God for many gifts He had given them, they almost demanded thanks from God for being such pious people.

From this sad story of the Pharisees we can learn one thing, that is while God approves no sin, His mercy and forgiveness is available for all sinners except the proud. The attitude of tax collector on the other hand is attitude of humility. He accepts himself as a sinner and unworthy. He prays from a humble and contrite heart. The attitude of the tax collector is true model for us. Do I approach God with a self-confident and righteous attitude of Pharisee or with a full awareness of nothingness before God's presence? Let us ask God make me more humble and God centred.

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