

**Sunday, October 6, 2024**

XXVII Sunday in Ordinary Time - Year B

Gn 2:18-24; Ps 128; Heb 2:9-11; Mk 10:2-16

On this first Missionary Sunday of October, let's begin by recognizing the blessings that the Lord has wanted to give us since the creation of the world! The blessing of the spouses who help each other (First Reading); the blessing of family life and the happiness of walking in the ways of the Lord (Psalm); the blessing of sanctification brought by Jesus Christ who leads us along the path of love (Second Reading); and finally, the blessing of the hearts of children who welcome the life of the Kingdom (Gospel).

In this Missionary Month, then, let us celebrate those blessed by the Lord who, in their lives consecrated to the Lord, as well as in the lives of couples and families, commit themselves in the name of their faith to building the Kingdom of justice, fraternity, mutual help, charity and solidarity. Through them, God works to unite people and to help the poorest and most needy. Together, and not alone, people learn to overcome individualism, self-centeredness and hardness of heart, and to grow in love, sharing, forgetfulness and self-giving. We're used to seeing priests and religious communities committed to the cause of the Kingdom of God; our times offer us the grace of missionary couples and families, and also from movements that take up the missionary challenge: "Go and make disciples of all nations" (Mt 28:19) "Go and invite everyone to the banquet!" (Mt 22:9) (WMS 2024 theme). Commenting on the chosen theme the Holy Father said: "We find two words that express the heart of the mission: the verbs "to go out" and "to invite". As for the first, we need to remember that the servants had previously been sent to deliver the king's invitation to the guests (cf. vv. 3-4). Mission, we see, is a tireless going out to all men and women, in order to invite them to encounter God and enter into communion with him. Tireless! God, great in love and rich in mercy, constantly sets out to encounter all men and women, and to call them to the happiness of his kingdom, even in the face of their indifference or refusal." (Message for World Mission [Sun]Day 2024)

From the 7th Catechesis of Pope Francis on the Passion for Evangelization, let's remember the following: "The Council says: "the Christian vocation by its very nature is also a vocation to the apostolate" (Decree *Apostolicam actuositatem* [AA], 2). It is a calling that is common, just as "a common dignity [is shared] as members from their regeneration in Christ, having the same filial grace and the same vocation to perfection; possessing in common one salvation, one hope and one undivided charity" (*Lumen gentium*, 32). It is a call that concerns both those who have received the sacrament of Orders, consecrated persons, and all lay faithful, man or woman: it is a call to all."

Mission is a matter of the heart that welcomes the Kingdom. Blessed Pauline Jaricot discovered this in her life of prayer and summed it up so well: “Prayer is the Kingdom of God within us. May our hearts be overwhelmed by the infinite love of Jesus Christ!” Mission is also a question of proclaiming the Kingdom of God, who is always close, loving and merciful.

Jesus says: “Preach as you go, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand’” (v. 7). This is what must be said, first and foremost: God is near. So, never forget this: God has always been close to the people. He said it to the people himself: He said, “Look, what God is as close to the nations as I am to you?” This closeness is one of the most important things about God. There are three important things: closeness, mercy, and tenderness. Don’t forget that. Who is God? The One Who is Close, the One Who is Tender, the One Who is Merciful. (Catechesis 4. The passion for evangelization)

Let us pray that each person, each couple, each family may find the blessing and beauty of love’s plan for them. If we welcome the Kingdom of God within us, as children of God, our hearts will bear the fruits of love, mutual help, communion and unity, and we will see happiness, as the Psalmist says. May Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus guide us in the mission of all the baptized during this Missionary Month. Pope Francis, inspired by her, tells us: “Missionaries, in fact — of whom Thérèse is patroness — are not only those who travel long distances, learn new languages, do good works, and are good at proclamation; no, a missionary is also anyone who lives as an instrument of God’s love where they are. Missionaries are those who do everything so that, through their witness, their prayer, their intercession, Jesus might pass by.

This is the apostolic zeal that, let us always remember, never works by proselytism — never — or constraint, — never — but by attraction. Faith is born by attraction. One does not become Christian because they are forced by someone, but because they have been touched by love.” (Catechesis 16. The passion for evangelization).

Pope Francis presents the testimony of a Venezuelan layman who was a missionary and an instrument of God’s love wherever he went: Blessed José Gregorio Hernández Cisneros. “He was born in 1864 and learned the faith above all from his mother, as he recounted, “My mother taught me virtue from the time I was in a crib, made me grow in the knowledge of God and gave me charity as my guide”. Let us take note: it is moms who pass on the faith. The faith is passed on in dialect, that is, in the language of moms, that dialect that moms use to speak with their children. And to you, moms: be mindful in passing on the faith in that maternal dialect.

Truly, charity was the north star that oriented the existence of Blessed José Gregorio: a good and joyful person with a cheerful disposition, he was endowed with a marked intelligence.

He became a physician, a university professor, and a scientist. But he was first and foremost a doctor close to the weakest, so much so that he was known in his homeland as “the doctor of the poor”. He cared for the poor, always. To the riches of money he preferred the riches of the Gospel, spending his existence to aid the needy. José Gregorio saw Jesus in the poor, the sick, migrants and the suffering. And the success he never sought in the world, he received, and continues to receive, from the people, who call him “saint of the people”, “apostle of charity”, “missionary of hope”. Beautiful names: “saint of the people”, “apostle of the people”, “missionary of hope”. (Catechesis 20)

He’s proving that, as the Gospel proclaims this Sunday, “Yet, if we love one another, God remains in us, and his love is brought to perfection in us” (1Jn 4:12)