

Homily of Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time Year C, 2022

Sirach 35:12-14, 16-18; Psalm 34:2-3, 17-19, 23; 2 Timothy 4:6-8, 16-18; Luke 18:9-14

This Sunday, October 23, 2022 is World Mission Sunday. Pope Pius XI instituted World Mission Sunday in 1926 to be an annual day of prayers and expression of support for the Catholic Church missionary vision and character. For this year's Mission Sunday, Pope Francis chooses Acts 1:8 as the theme, "You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth." This theme reminds us that the Church is missionary by nature. The pope, in his message, invites us to be "faithful witnesses." He explains why he invites us to be faithful witnesses in the words of St. Paul VI, "Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses" ([Evangelii Nuntiandi](#), 41).

The Missionary Society of St. Paul of Nigeria summarizes the believers' participation in the missionary vision, character, and nature of the Church in the following words, "Some go to the missions by going; some go to the missions by praying; and some go to the missions by giving." Whether we are called to witness by going to the missions; or called to witness by praying for the missions and missionaries; or called to witness by giving for the missions; Pope Francis invites us to be faithful witnesses.

In a special way, today, we remember and pray for numerous faithful and generous Catholics whose faithfulness and generosity have kept and sustained missionaries in, especially, difficult missions. We are all invited to remain faithful and generous in praying for the missions and the missionaries; providing their material and financial needs.

A major part of last Sunday's reflection was on prayer. Again, this Sunday, the Church presents us readings to help us to continue our reflection on prayer. This shows how important prayer is in our journey of faith. The first reading encourages us to cry to the Lord when we are oppressed by life's events because "the prayer of the lowly pierces the clouds" (Sirach 35:21).

Jesus gives us the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector in today's gospel to help us examine how we pray and the motives of our prayers. The parable helps us to understand why some prayers "pierce the clouds," and why some prayers do not. "The Pharisee took up his position and spoke this prayer to himself, 'O God, I thank you that I am not like the rest of humanity — greedy, dishonest, adulterous — or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week, and I pay tithes on my whole income.'"

James 4:3 says, "You ask and do not receive because you ask with wrong motives..." This is very evident in the prayer of the Pharisee. He took up his position and spoke his prayer to himself, glorifying himself; and then spoke uncharitably about others. He was arrogant and despised everyone else. St. Augustine regards this type of prayer as "praying in a fleshy, unspiritual manner."

When we are self-righteous, disrespect and despise people, the Bible has some advice for us; "The one who despises his neighbor lacks sense" (Proverbs 11:12). Also, "The one who despises his neighbor sins" (Proverbs 14:21).

"The tax collector stood off at a distance and would not even raise his eyes to heaven but beat his breast and prayed, 'O God, be merciful to me a sinner.'" The tax collector prayed to God with humble and contrite of heart. Jesus concludes, "I tell you; the latter went home justified, not the former..." and "Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and the one who humbles himself will be exalted." Psalm 51:17, "A humble and contrite heart you will not spurn, O Lord." James 4:6, "God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble." 1 Peter 5:6, "Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time." "Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for yourselves" (Matthew 11:29).

Jesus, meek and humble of heart, make my heart like unto thine. Amen.

In the second reading, St. Paul says of himself, "For I am already being poured out like a libation... I have competed well; I have finished the race; I have kept the faith. From now on the crown of righteousness awaits me..." (2 Timothy 4:6-8). We may not be able to, boldly, make such claims as St. Paul. However, we pray that God gives us the grace to do our very best in our various callings; compete well, not lose faith, and finish our race.

St. Paul also mentions in the reading the desertion he suffered, but was sustained and strengthened by the Lord. St. Paul's experience reminds us that we might at some point, also, suffer desertion. We might at some point be disappointed and be brokenhearted by desertion. When these happen, let us rely on the Lord who never deserts us. He sustains and strengthens us. Today's Psalm says, "The Lord is close to the brokenhearted; and those who are crushed in spirit he saves" (Psalm 34:18).

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