

Homily of Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time Year B, 2021

World Mission Sunday

Jeremiah 31:7-9; Psalm 126:1-6; Hebrews 5:1-6; Mark 10:46-52

Today is World Mission Sunday. Our reflection is in two parts: the first part is about the mission mandate of the Catholic Church; and the second part is on the readings of the Mass.

On this World Mission Sunday, we celebrate the Catholic Church's obedience to Jesus' commands:

"Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15).

"Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, drive out demons. Without cost you have received; without cost you are to give" (Matthew 10:8).

"Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19).

Feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, welcome strangers, clothe the naked, and visit the sick and prisoners (Matthew 25:35-40).

Jesus assures us, "And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20).

The Catholic Church is in almost every part of the world carrying out Jesus' commands. The Vatican II document, The Decree on the Mission Activity of the Church says, "The pilgrim Church is missionary by her very nature, since it is from the mission of the Son and the mission of the Holy Spirit that she draws her origin, in accordance with the decree of God the Father" (*Ad Gentes*, 2).

The Church is on mission in many difficult parts of the world where Christians are persecuted, where people are very impoverished, where people need education, and where people need medical care. We have the responsibility, not only to pray for the mission of the Church in the difficult parts of the world, but also to support the mission with financial help. That is the essence of today's second collection. We have the responsibility to support the less privileged in the other parts of the world. The Missionary Society of St. Paul of Nigeria has a saying, "Some give to the missions by going; some go to the missions by giving." Based on this statement, we are all missionaries.

Pope Francis in his message for World Mission Day, 2021, writes, "... In these days of pandemic, when there is a temptation to disguise and justify indifference and apathy in the name of healthy social distancing, there is urgent need for *the mission of compassion*, which can make that necessary distancing an opportunity for encounter, care and promotion." ... "The theme of this year's World Mission Day – 'We cannot but speak about what we have seen and heard' (Acts 4:20), is a summon to each of us to 'own' and to bring to others what we bear in our hearts."

The first reading has two interpretations. The first interpretation is that the reading is an excerpt of Prophet Jeremiah's prophecy of consolation to the exiled people of Israel. Jeremiah consoled them to be hopeful and look forward to their redemption from their Babylonian captors and oppressors. The second interpretation is that the passage is a prophecy about Jesus, the redeemer, who was to come to liberate the world from sin, affliction and sorrow, as exemplified in today's gospel.

The story of Bartimaeus in the gospel is very challenging. On hearing that Jesus was passing, he began to cry out to him. To draw Jesus' attention, Bartimaeus called him by his ancestral name, "Son of David." The gospel made it clear that "many people rebuked him, telling him to be silent." He refused to be silenced. He refused to be discouraged. The reading says, "He kept calling out the more." He caught Jesus' attention who stopped and said, "Call him." The cloak the blind man was wearing showed that the weather was, probably, cold. But when Jesus sent for him, there was immediate interior and exterior transformation. He suddenly became warm. "He threw aside his cloak, sprang up and came to Jesus." His request, "Master, I want to see." Jesus said to him, "Go your way; your faith has saved you." When he received his sight, immediately he followed Jesus on the way.

We may not be physically blind like Bartimaeus, but we are spiritually blind in one way or another. We are spiritually blind when we have issues that obstruct our relationship with God, or when we do not see God's hand in our lives, or see the signs God shows us. We are spiritually blind when we do not tell or accept the truth; or, we are shortsighted and unable to see the bigger picture. Our blindness may be that we are in some 'darkness,' and we need the light of Christ to light up our mind and our way. Our blindness may be that we are in search of something, and we need divine insight. Our blindness may be that we are in a 'valley of decision' and we need divine inspiration and guidance.

Let nothing discourage us from persisting in prayer like Bartimaeus. May the "Son of David" hear our prayer as he heard that of Bartimaeus, and save us from whatever that is our blindness. Lord and Master, open our eyes that we may see again. Amen.

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