

30th SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME – B

(Jeremiah 31:7-9; Hebrews 5:1-6; Mark 10:46-52)

Excerpts of World Mission Day 2021

by Father Charles Fillion

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Brothers and sisters, we are celebrating World Mission Sunday. This Sunday's Good News talks about God's compassion, His fatherly love which, on one hand, in the Old Covenant, saves His people and guides them to salvation; on the other hand, in the New Covenant, God saves the world through the only Mediator, Jesus Christ. Today's present condition makes us aware of the human poverty that cries out to the Lord in search of help and mercy.

In this Sunday's Gospel, we find a paradox that comes from the fact that this blind man sees exactly who Jesus of Nazareth is. He calls Him "Son of David." In the biblical tradition, it is the name of the Messiah awaited by the chosen people. We must allow ourselves to be led by the Master towards the enlightening of Faith. Today, Jesus invites us to open the eyes of our hearts in order to welcome in faith the vision of a suffering and triumphant Messiah.

In his message last year, Pope Francis wrote: "Nor can missionary fervour ever be obtained as the result of reasoning or calculation. To be 'in a state of mission' is a reflection of gratitude. It is the response of one who by gratitude is made docile to the Spirit and is therefore free. Only in the freedom of gratitude can one truly know the Lord, whereas it is useless and above all improper to insist on presenting missionary activity and the proclamation of the Gospel as if they were a binding duty, a kind of 'contractual obligation' on the part of the baptized."

Once we experience the power of God's love, and recognize his presence in our personal and community life, we cannot help but proclaim and share *what we have seen and heard*. Jesus' relationship with his disciples and his humanity, as revealed to us in the mystery of his Incarnation, Gospel and Paschal Mystery, shows us the extent to which God loves our humanity and makes his own our joys and sufferings, our hopes and our concerns (cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, 22). Everything about Christ reminds us that he knows well our world and its need for redemption, and calls us to become actively engaged in this mission. No one is excluded, no one need feel distant or removed from this compassionate love.

The first Christians began the life of faith amid hostility and hardship. Yet, rather than a difficulty or an obstacle, those experiences impelled them to turn problems, conflicts and difficulties into opportunities for mission. Our own moment in our history is not easy. The pandemic has brought to the forefront and amplified the pain, the solitude, the poverty and the injustices experienced by so many people. It has unmasked our false sense of security. Those who are most frail and vulnerable have come to feel even more so. For our part, however, "we do not proclaim

ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake" (2 Cor 4:5).

In these days of pandemic, there is urgent need for *the mission of compassion*. In our present circumstances, there is an urgent need for missionaries of hope who (...) can provide a prophetic reminder that no one is saved by himself. Everything we have received from the Lord is meant to be put to good use and freely shared with others. Just as the Apostles saw, heard and touched the saving power of Jesus, we too can daily touch the sorrowful and glorious flesh of Christ. As Christians, we cannot keep the Lord to ourselves: the Church's evangelizing mission finds fulfilment in the transformation of our world and in the care of creation.

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. This mission has always been the hallmark of the Church, for "she exists to evangelize" (Saint Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 14). The first Christians were inspired by the Lord and his offer of new life to go out among the nations and to bear witness to what they had seen and heard: the good news that the Kingdom of God is at hand. They did so with the generosity, gratitude in the knowledge that others will enjoy the fruit of their efforts and sacrifice. "Even those who are most frail, limited and troubled can be missionaries in their own way, for goodness can always be shared, even if it exists alongside many limitations" (*Christus Vivit*, 239).

We know that the call to mission is not a thing of the past, or a romantic leftover from earlier times. Today too Jesus needs hearts capable of experiencing vocation as a true love story that urges them to go forth to the peripheries of our world as messengers and agents of compassion. He addresses this call to everyone, and in different ways. We can think of the peripheries all around us, in the heart of our cities or our own families. Always, but especially in these times of pandemic, it is important to grow in our daily ability to widen our circle, to reach out to others who, although physically close to us, are not immediately part of our "circle of interests" (cf. *Fratelli Tutti*, 97).

To be on mission is to be willing to think as Christ does, to believe with him that those around us are also my brothers and sisters. May his compassionate love touch our hearts and make us all true missionary disciples. May we not only welcome these words from the Acts of the Apostles, but really be our mission: "It is impossible for us not to speak about what we have seen and heard." (Acts 4:20) May Our Lady of the Missions and Saint Joseph intercede for us.