

WORLD MISSION SUNDAY 2020

missio
Today. Tomorrow. Together.

Homily notes & intercessions

Sunday 18 October 2020

First Reading: Isaiah 45:1,4-6

Cyrus the Great was the Persian king of a great empire and in Sacred Scripture he is the only non-Jewish person to be called God's 'anointed one'. He was known as a gifted administrator who respected the customs and religions in all the lands he conquered, including Israel. God chose someone who 'does not know' God to be His instrument, someone we might say is unsuitable or even unable to be an instrument of God's grace. We are reminded that, in mystery, God chooses whomsoever He wants to be His missionaries of justice and mercy.

Second Reading: 1 Thessalonians 1:1-5

St Paul's Letter to the Thessalonians takes up the theme of being chosen by God and sent out to the nations to proclaim new life in the Risen Christ, who leads us to the Father by the power of the Holy Spirit. 'Woe to me if I do not proclaim the Gospel.' (1 Cor 9:16). Paul met this enormous challenge with an active faith, which was motivated by love, and with the sure and certain hope that God would ensure his mission would bear fruit. Our God-given mission draws us away from our own small worlds to reach out to those throughout the world in need of genuine, life-changing Good News.

Gospel: Matthew 22:15-21

Jesus is once again in conflict with the Pharisees. They cannot see who Jesus is, nor can they hear and understand His teaching about the Kingdom of God. Jesus deals with them with open honesty and gentle firmness. He stuns them with the challenge to think deeply about what in truth belongs to God. We are urged to return to the world all that belongs to the world: our deep-seated prejudices, false assumptions and irrational fears, our worship of society's current 'idols', along with unhealthy desires and cravings for all that is passing and ultimately meaningless; and to give to God our unconditional commitment to do His Will. When we have 'given back to Caesar' can we say, 'Here I am, send me!' and mean it from the depths of our being.

Reflection

On Saturday 6 March 100 years ago, The Tablet recorded the 'Departure of Uganda Missionaries at Westminster Cathedral'. It was the sending ceremony of a band of eight Mill Hill Missionaries for Uganda, a thriving mission area.

Fr Bernard Vaughan, the brother of the late Cardinal Herbert Vaughan, founder of the Mill Hill Missionaries, pointed out how 'a person with an ideal or a mission in life would undergo any hardship to attain that ideal, though success could not be guaranteed'.

Those eight young missionaries would soon understand the meaning of those words. Along with all missionaries of the day, some would inevitably succumb to tropical disease and others to bitter disappointment. Undoubtedly, they would all experience hardship of one kind or another. Some would not live long enough to return home.

The sending ceremony in a packed cathedral was clearly solemn and joyful, culminating in the traditional kissing of the feet of the departing missionaries, and closing with the Hymn of Departure, sung by the Mill Hill students:

*'Go forth, ye heralds of God's tender mercy;
The day has come at last, the day of joy.
Your burning zeal is shackled by no fetters,
Go forth, O brothers, happy you! Go forth'.*

Also present at the ceremony was Mother Kevin OBE, founder of the Franciscan Sisters of Mill Hill, who was due to return to Uganda with two other missionary Sisters. They were to continue their amazing witness to God's love among the people they served.

These brave men and women embody the theme of this year's World Mission Sunday – Isaiah 6:8, 'Here I am, send me!' We rejoice in the countless examples of men and women missionaries in the past who responded with joy to their call to mission overseas. However, as disciples of the living Christ we look forward to the future with hope. Our mission has only just begun. Most of the world still needs to be introduced to Jesus Christ, the Risen One. Can we afford the luxury of celebrating the heroic exploits of past missionaries alone? Will their example inspire us to do likewise today?

In Pope Francis' Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelium Gaudium* (15) he echoes the tradition of his predecessors: 'We cannot forget that evangelisation is first and foremost about preaching the Gospel to those who do not know Jesus Christ or who have rejected him. All of them have the right to receive the Gospel'.

World Mission Sunday is celebrated in every Catholic community in the world. It provides us with a moment of grace to express solidarity with our brothers and sisters in Christ who are living in situations of poverty, violence and oppression.

In the Holy Father's message for World Mission Sunday, he says: 'The Church continues the mission of Jesus and sends us everywhere so that, through our witness and the proclamation of the Gospel, God may continue to manifest his love and transform hearts, societies and cultures'.

On this day through **prayer, reflection** and **material** help we express our support of missionaries from all continents who are striving to preach and live the Gospel among those have yet to receive it.

Sister Nilcéia is a Brazilian missionary working in a health clinic in a remote area of Malawi, one of the poorest countries in the world. She has responded to God's call by devoting her life to the practical care and spiritual nourishment of the most vulnerable. **Please read more about her work on pages 12-13 and 16-17 of *Mission Today*.** She says:

'Our small clinic is an oasis of hope. Despite the challenges, we persevere in this work because we love God and we love his people. I believe in the goodness of God and we serve as Jesus did. But sometimes, the darkness seems very dark. We share all that we have but sometimes it is not enough to save a sick child. The need here in Malawi is great but the Lord is faithful, and we continue to serve. We take courage from knowing you are with us in this mission. Together we are one family, one faith, one Church, and together we share love through good actions.'

Missio, the Holy Father's charity for world mission, helps Churches too poor or too young to support themselves. What you donate today will make a difference to struggling communities throughout the world.

'God continues to look for those whom he can send forth into the world and to the nations to bear witness to his love, his deliverance from sin and death, his liberation from evil' (Pope Francis).

This World Mission Sunday, how will we share God's love with those near and far?

Prayers of the Faithful

Celebrant: *On this World Mission Sunday, we unite with the whole Catholic Church in praying for the coming of God's Kingdom.*

- **For Pope Francis, our Bishop... and all the leaders of the Church:** may they continue to lead us in our response to God's call to mission.
- **For all missionaries, men and women dedicated to sharing the Gospel of Jesus with those who have not yet received it:** may they be given the strength and courage to persevere in their mission.
- **For those who have not yet received the Good News of Jesus Christ:** may we obey his call to go forth in order to reach all those in need of the light of the Gospel.
- **For young and growing Catholic communities across the world, especially the Church in Malawi:** may our prayers and charity give them courage to persevere in their mission of proclaiming the Gospel.
- **For those who live in areas of war, poverty and injustice:** may we help to heal wounds, build bridges, strengthen relationships and bear one another's burdens.
- **For those who are suffering, grieving, and anxious:** help us to strive together as a family of many nations to help those in greatest need.

Celebrant: *God our Father, your Son Jesus Christ calls us to be missionary disciples. May your Church so abound in love and compassion that the joy of the Gospel will fill the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus. We ask all this through the same Christ, our Lord. Amen.*

Final Blessing

May God support you all the day long,
till the shades lengthen and the evening comes,
and the busy world is hushed, and the fever of life is over,
and our work is done.

Then in his mercy may he give you a safe lodging,
and a holy rest. **Amen.**

May Almighty God bless you, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

(Taken from a prayer by St John Henry Newman)

Intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary

May the Most Blessed Virgin Mary, Star of Evangelisation and Comforter of the Afflicted, missionary disciple of her Son Jesus, continue to intercede for us and sustain us.

(Pope Francis' Message for World Mission Sunday 2020)