

WORLD MISSIONARY MONTH 2021

Reflections on the readings for every Sunday of October 2021

By Father Alexandre Kabera

Sunday, October 3, 2021

“Therefore, what God has joined together, no human being must separate.” (Mark 10:9)

In this Sunday’s Gospel, the Pharisees ask a question about a husband who dismisses his wife. Jesus goes back in time and quotes the book of Genesis (Gen 1:27) which presents the union between a man and a woman as a solid foundation on which humanity must be built. This essential unity, founded on God’s divine plan, is a reality that must be protected at all costs. Jesus firmly insists: “Therefore what God has joined together; no human being must separate.” (Mark 10:9) Furthermore, Jesus shows his disciples that children are the models of welcoming the Kingdom of God.

The book of Genesis offers us a beautiful illustration of the dynamics of being a missionary. Like a man who leaves his father and mother to start a family, thus each person who is called to be a missionary leaves his family to bring the Good News elsewhere. Those who benefit from the missions are invited to welcome the proclamation of salvation with the confidence and gratitude of children.

Precisely this year, we are celebrating the 20th anniversary of the beatification of Luigi and Maria Beltrame Quattrocchi, the first married couple who became blessed in the Church’s history. During his homily for World Mission Sunday, on October 21, 2001, Pope John Paul II said: “Dear husbands and wives, I encourage you to embrace your role and your responsibilities. Renew your missionary zeal, making your homes privileged places for announcing and accepting the Gospel in an atmosphere of prayer and in the concrete exercise of Christian solidarity.”

When the priests and leaders of the people who asked them by what power, or in whose name, they spoke to the people and performed miracles, Peter and John responded: “Whether it is right in the sight of God for us to obey you rather than God, you be the judges. It is impossible for us not to speak about what we have seen and heard.” (Acts 4:19–20) We also should, with a missionary zeal inspired by the Holy Spirit, proclaim to the world the wonders of Our Lord.

May Our Lady of the Missions and Saint Joseph intercede for us.

Sunday, October 10, 2021

“What must I do to inherit eternal life?” (Mark 10:17)

The story of the rich young man in this Sunday’s Gospel describes how to become a disciple of Jesus. The question is significant: “What must I do to inherit eternal life?” (Mk 10:17) The Master recognizes that in the young man’s eyes, practising the divine commandments is the normal and ordinary way to achieve it. But the Good News suggested by Jesus is a call to go beyond this. It is not enough to be faithful to the commandments of God; it is necessary to follow the very person of the Messiah. The point of the story is not to give up possessions, but to become attached to the person of Jesus Christ. The story of the rich young man is told within Jesus’ path towards His Passion. Therefore, following Christ and becoming a Christian, involves a certain austerity.

“It is impossible for us not to speak about what we have seen and heard.” (Acts 4:20) We cannot forget about Saint Daniel Comboni, a bishop in whom the *sapientia crucis* shone intensely through total self-giving and an extraordinary love for the African peoples. He died of cholera precisely on October 10, 1881, in Khartoum at the age of 50. His life demonstrates his total devotion to his missionary vocation. The Church is indebted to him through his *Plan for the rebirth of Africa*: a profound evangelization of this continent.

Jesus Himself adopted a way of life for His mission: an itinerant ministry, detached as much as possible from the conditions of ordinary life: from having a family and goods. In the present moment, Jesus renews this kind of calling. He says to each one of us: “Come and follow me.” We must go beyond the faith of our elders and become disciples of the Lord. It is a surpassing understanding that makes us realize the missionary grace.

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Sunday, October 17, 2021

“For the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.” (Mark 10: 45). In the Gospel we see that the attitude of the sons of Zebedee is exactly the opposite of that of their Master: they behave like boastful teenagers, who only aim to be popular in front of their companions who, obviously, are indignant.

James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to Jesus and said to him, "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you." He replied, "What do you wish me to do for you?" They answered him, "Grant that in your glory we may sit one at your right and the other at your left." Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you are asking. Can you drink the cup that I drink or be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?"

They said to him, "We can." Jesus said to them, "The cup that I drink, you will drink, and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized; but to sit at my right or at my left is not mine to give but is for those for whom it has been prepared." When the ten heard this, they became indignant at James and John.

Jesus' response to the pretentious request of the sons of Zebedee is full of tenderness: he points out to the two disciples that they have asked for a privilege whose importance they cannot comprehend, in their ignorance. Moreover, it is not up to him to grant, yet he seems to approve their bold confidence in affirming that they can drink his cup: "*The cup that I drink you will drink; and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized*". It is as if he were saddened for the future suffering and death his apostles that they would endure in their human condition in testimony to the love they would bear him, the Master, even if small and imperfect.

Then Jesus, aware that the indignation of the other ten, gives everyone a wonderful lesson in humility, service and self-giving, showing who the true disciple is:

Jesus summoned them and said to them, "You know that those who are recognized as rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones make their authority over them felt. But it shall not be so among you. Rather, whoever wishes to be great among you will be your servant; whoever wishes to be first among you will be the slave of all. For the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Sunday, October 24, 2021

"Go your way; your faith has saved you." (Mark 10:52)

We celebrate World Mission Sunday 2021 with the following theme: "It is impossible for us not to speak about what we have seen and heard." (Acts 4:20) This Sunday's Good News talks about God's compassion, His divine love which, on the one hand, saves His people and guides them to salvation in the Old Covenant; on the other hand, God saves the world through the only Mediator, Jesus Christ, in the New Covenant. 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, Jesus heals the blind man in Jericho. The paradox 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 to welcome in faith the vision of a suffering and triumphant Messiah.

In his message to the Pontifical Mission Societies on May 21, 2020, Pope Francis wrote: "Nor can missionary favour ever be obtained as the result of reasoning or calculation. To be 'in a state of mission' reflects 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."

Today, we are invited to listen carefully and meditate on Pope Francis' Message for World Mission Sunday 2021. With kindness we welcome these words from the Acts of the Apostles: "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.

Sunday, October 31, 2021

"You shall love the Lord your God; you shall love your neighbour as yourself." (Mark 12:30-31)