

PONTIFICAL MISSIONARY UNION
MARCH 2022
(For priests, consecrated persons, laity)

Missionary meditation for the month of March and for the season of Lent, drawn from the documents of the Church and the writings of Blessed Father Paolo Manna.

From the Letter of Saint Paul to the Philippians

“For God is the one who, for his good purpose, works in you both to desire and to work. Do everything without grumbling or questioning, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, * among whom you shine like lights in the world, as you hold on to the word of life.”

(Phil 2:13-16)

From the Magisterium of the Catholic Church

“There are three general ways in which a Catholic can assist the missionary effort, and missionaries themselves constantly remind us of them. The first is within everyone’s capacity. This first means is prayer, prayer that God may grant the missions His merciful aid. [...] Secondly, something must be done about the scarcity of missionaries. [...] Finally, the missions need economic help, and a substantial amount of it.”

(BENEDICT XV, Apostolic Letter on the Propagation of the Faith throughout the World, *Maximum Illud*, n. 32)

“In the first place, both in sermons and by your writings, strive to have introduced and gradually to extend the pious custom of praying ‘the Lord of the harvest, that he sends forth laborers into his harvest’ (*Matt.* ix, 38) and of asking for the heathen the light of the Holy Spirit and the grace of God. We say that these prayers should become habitual for it is evident that prayers said in this manner cannot but have more efficacy before the seat of Divine Mercy than prayers said but once or only occasionally. Even though the missionaries labor most zealously, though they work and toil and go so far as to lay down their very lives in order to bring to the pagans a knowledge of the Catholic religion, though they employ every means known to human ingenuity and spare themselves in nothing, all this will avail them nothing, all their efforts will go for naught, if God by His grace does not touch the hearts of the heathen in order to soften and attract them to Himself.

Everyone can pray, of this fact there can be no question. Everyone, therefore, has at hand and can make use of this all-important help, this daily nourishment of the missions.”

(PIUS XI, Encyclical Letter, *Rerum Ecclesiae*, n. 7-8)

“From the beginning holy Church by her very nature has been compelled to spread the Word of God everywhere, and in fulfilling this obligation to which she knows not how to be unfaithful she has never ceased to ask for a threefold assistance from her children: namely, prayers, material aid, and, in some cases, the gift of themselves. At the present day, too, her missionary activities, especially in Africa, demand this threefold assistance from the Catholic world.”

(PIUS XII, Encyclical Letter on the Present Condition of the Catholic Missions, especially in Africa, *Fidei Donum*, n. 48)

“Among the forms of sharing, first place goes to spiritual cooperation through prayer, sacrifice and the witness of Christian life. Prayer should accompany the journey of missionaries so that the proclamation of the word will be effective through God’s grace. In his Letters, St. Paul often asks the faithful to pray for him so that he might proclaim the Gospel with confidence and conviction. Prayer needs to be accompanied by sacrifice. The redemptive value of suffering, accepted and offered to God with love, derives from the sacrifice of Christ

himself, who calls the members of his Mystical Body to share in his sufferings, to complete them in their own flesh (cf. Col 1:24).”

(JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter on the permanent validity of the Church’s missionary mandate, *Redemptoris Missio*, n. 78)

“The Gospel of suffering signifies not only the presence of suffering in the Gospel, as one of the themes of the Good News, but also the revelation of *the salvific power and salvific significance* of suffering in Christ’s messianic mission and, subsequently, in the mission and vocation of the Church.”

(JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Letter on the Christian Meaning of Human Suffering, *Salvifici Doloris*, n. 25)

“And so the Church sees in all Christ’s suffering brothers and sisters as it were a *multiple subject of his supernatural power*. How often is it precisely to them that the pastors of the Church appeal, and precisely from them that they seek help and support! [...] Those who share in the sufferings of Christ preserve in their own sufferings a very special *particle of the infinite treasure* of the world’s Redemption, and can share this treasure with others.”

(JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Letter on the Christian Meaning of Human Suffering, *Salvifici Doloris*, n. 27)

From the writings of Blessed Father Paolo Manna

“Prayer – The greatest help of all! There are three kinds of help which the faithful can contribute to the missions – prayer, personal service, and financial assistance.”

(P. MANNA, *The Conversion of the Pagan World: A Treatise upon Catholic Foreign Missions*, translated and adapted from the Italian of rev. Paolo Manna, M. Ap. by rev. Joseph F. McGlinchey, d.d., Boston, Society for the propagation of the Faith 1921, 227)

“Now, among the means which Our Lord has placed in our hands for co-operating in the propagation of the Faith and the salvation of souls, the most efficacious, the most indispensable, and also the easiest, is prayer.”

(P. MANNA, *The Conversion of the Pagan World: A Treatise upon Catholic Foreign Missions*, Boston, 1921, 228)

“Prayer is a very easy means of helping, as it does not entail physical force, material contributions, long voyages, work, suffering, or martyrdom. A Mass, a Communion, an offering to Almighty God of our day’s work with its joys and sorrows, a word, a desire, a thought, in the spirit of prayer, are worth more than a generous donation.”

(P. MANNA, *The Conversion of the Pagan World: A Treatise upon Catholic Foreign Missions*, Boston, 1921, 228)

“By our fervent prayers we can be efficacious instruments for the salvation of so many unhappy souls who, perhaps, we shall never know in this world, but who in Heaven will be eternally grateful to us.”

(P. MANNA, *The Conversion of the Pagan World: A Treatise upon Catholic Foreign Missions*, Boston, 1921, 233)

“It is at the foot of the crucifix rather than in great ability and natural gifts on the part of preachers that we must look for the secret of a fruitful apostolate.”

(P. MANNA, *The Conversion of the Pagan World: A Treatise upon Catholic Foreign Missions*, Boston, 1921, 233)

“God could save this and a thousand other worlds by a mere act of His will, but instead He wishes to save it by suffering, by prayer, and by the teachings of His Only-begotten Son. And as He brought about the Redemption, so He wishes to apply its merits to men, that is, through suffering, prayer, and the teachings of His Holy Church.”

(P. MANNA, *The Conversion of the Pagan World: A Treatise upon Catholic Foreign Missions*, Boston, 1921, 235)

“It is also most efficacious to unite with our prayers the offering of our sufferings, and to interest afflicted souls and the sick. They may turn their sufferings into good for the apostolate by offering them to the Heart of

Jesus for the missions. Jesus has saved the world by means of the Cross, and it is only by expiation that souls are saved.”

(P. MANNA, *The Conversion of the Pagan World: A Treatise upon Catholic Foreign Missions*, Boston, 1921, 237)

“The crucifix is everything for the missionary. It is his strength, his consolation, his model, his courage, his success! The Crucifix is the explanation of the Missionary, and without it, there is not even the idea of the missionary.”

(P. MANNA, *Operarii autem pauci! La vocazione alle missioni estere*, Milano 1960, *op. cit.*, p. 153)

“It is a misunderstanding of the missionary vocation to accept only the active part of one’s ministry by teaching, preaching and baptizing, without also accepting the passive role of being a victim for Jesus, a victim with Jesus for the conversion of souls.”

(P. MANNA, *Apostolic Virtues*, translated from Italian by Fr. Steve Baumbusch, PIME, New York 2009, 226)

Questions for reflection

- How often do I pray for missionaries?
- Do I accept difficulties and sufferings with trust in God and offer them for missions and missionaries?
- How much do I realize that my free and conscious acceptance and offering of suffering in union with Christ has a redeeming power?

PRAYER

God, our Father, in difficulty and sickness, give us the strength to unite our sufferings and weakness to the cross of Christ. Trustingly, we ask you never to forget us. You are always with us. Do not make us waver in our faith when we wait a long time for your grace. Through our prayer, give to missionaries strength and consolation and also to the sick who have no hope. We implore You; make sure that through the offering of our sufferings, faith and love are strengthened throughout the world. Call young people from all nations to follow you in missionary service. Most Clement Father, we trust that in Your kingdom all tears will dry up, because death is overcome together with suffering and disease. Always be with us on our way to You. Amen.