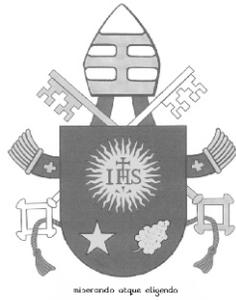


# Message of His Holiness Francis

World Mission Sunday 2014





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Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Today vast numbers of people still do not know Jesus Christ. For this reason, the mission *ad gentes* continues to be most urgent. All the members of the Church are called to participate in this mission, for the Church is missionary by her very nature: she was born "to go forth". World Mission Sunday is a privileged moment when the faithful of various continents engage in prayer and concrete gestures of solidarity in support of the young Churches in mission lands. It is a celebration of grace and joy. A celebration of grace, because the Holy Spirit, sent by the Father, offers wisdom and strength to those who are obedient to his action. A celebration of joy, because Jesus Christ, the Father's Son, sent to evangelize the world, supports and accompanies our missionary efforts. This joy of Jesus and of missionary disciples leads me to propose a biblical icon, which we find in the Gospel of Luke (cf. 10:21-23).

1. The Evangelist tells us that the Lord sent the seventy-two disciples two by two into cities and villages to proclaim that the Kingdom of God was near, and to prepare people to meet Jesus. After carrying out this mission of preaching, the disciples returned full of joy: joy is a dominant theme of this first and unforgettable missionary experience. Yet the divine Master told them: "Do not rejoice because the demons are subject to you; but rejoice because your names are written in heaven. At that very moment Jesus rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said: 'I give you praise, Father...' And, turning to the disciples in private he said, 'Blessed are the eyes that see what you see'" (Lk 10:20-21, 23).

Luke presents three scenes. Jesus speaks first to his disciples, then to the Father, and then again to the disciples. Jesus wanted to let the disciples share his joy, different and greater than anything they had previously experienced.

2. The disciples were filled with joy, excited about their power to set people free from demons. But Jesus cautioned them to rejoice not so much for the power they had received, but for the love they had received, "because your names are written in heaven" (Lk 10:20). The disciples were given an experience of God's love, but also the possibility of sharing that love. And this experience is a cause for gratitude and joy in the heart of Jesus. Luke saw this jubilation in a perspective of the Trinitarian communion: "Jesus rejoiced in the Holy Spirit", turning to the Father and praising him. This moment of deep joy springs from Jesus' immense filial love for his Father, Lord of heaven and earth, who hid these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to the childlike (cf. Lk 10:21).

God has both hidden and revealed, and in this prayer of praise it is his revealing which stands out. What is it that God has revealed and hidden? The mysteries of his Kingdom, the manifestation of divine lordship in Jesus and the victory over Satan.

God has hidden this from those who are all too full of themselves and who claim to know everything already. They are blinded by their presumptuousness and they leave no room for God. One can easily think of some of Jesus' contemporaries whom he repeatedly admonished, but the danger is one that always exists and concerns us too. The "little ones", for their part, are the humble, the simple, the poor, the marginalized, those without voice, those weary and burdened, whom Jesus pronounced "blessed". We readily think of Mary, Joseph, the fishermen of Galilee and the disciples whom Jesus called as he went preaching.

3. "Yes, Father, for such has been your gracious will" (Lk 10:21). These words of Jesus must be understood as referring to his inner exultation. The word "gracious" describes the Father's saving and benevolent plan for humanity. It was this divine graciousness that made Jesus rejoice, for the Father willed to love people with the same love that he has for his Son. Luke also alludes to the similar exultation of Mary: "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, and my spirit exults in God my Savior" (Lk 1:47). This is the Good News that leads to salvation. Mary, bearing in her womb Jesus, the evangelizer par excellence, met Elizabeth and rejoiced in the Holy Spirit as she sang her Magnificat. Jesus, seeing the success of his disciples' mission and their resulting joy, rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and addressed his Father in prayer. In both cases, it is joy for the working of salvation, for the love with which the Father loves his Son comes down to us, and through the Holy Spirit fills us and grants us a share in the Trinitarian life.

The Father is the source of joy. The Son is its manifestation, and the Holy Spirit its giver. Immediately after praising the Father, so the evangelist Matthew tells us, Jesus says: "Come to me, all you who labour and are burdened and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart, and you will find rest for yourselves. For my yoke is easy and my burden light." (Mt 11:28-30) "The joy of the Gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus. Those who accept his offer of salvation are set free from sin, sorrow, inner emptiness and loneliness. With Christ joy is constantly born anew." (Evangeliū Gaudium, 1)

The Virgin Mary had a unique experience of this encounter with Jesus, and thus became "*causa nostrae laetitiae*". The disciples, for their part, received the call to follow Jesus and to be sent by him to preach the Gospel (cf. Mk 3:14), and so they were filled with joy. Why shouldn't we too enter this flood of joy?

4. "The great danger in today's world, pervaded as it is by consumerism, is the desolation and anguish born of a complacent yet covetous heart, the feverish pursuit of frivolous pleasures, and a blunted conscience." (Evangeliū Gaudium, 2) Humanity greatly needs to lay hold of the salvation brought by Christ. His disciples are those who allow themselves to be seized ever more by the love of Jesus and marked by the fire of passion for the Kingdom of God and the proclamation of the joy of the Gospel. All the Lord's disciples are called to nurture the joy of evangelization. The Bishops, as those primarily responsible for this proclamation, have the task of promoting the unity of the local Church in her missionary commitment. They are called to acknowledge that the joy of communicating Jesus Christ is expressed in a concern to proclaim him in the most distant places, as well as in a constant outreach to the peripheries of their own territory, where great numbers of the poor are waiting for this message.

Many parts of the world are experiencing a dearth of vocations to the priesthood and the consecrated life. Often this is due to the absence of contagious apostolic fervour in communities which lack enthusiasm and thus fail to attract. The joy of the Gospel is born of the encounter with Christ and from sharing with the poor. For this reason I encourage parish communities, associations and groups to live an intense fraternal life, grounded in love for Jesus and concern for the needs of the most disadvantaged. Wherever there is joy, enthusiasm and a desire to bring Christ to others, genuine vocations arise. Among these vocations, we should not overlook lay vocations to mission. There has been a growing awareness of the identity and mission of the lay faithful in the Church, as well as recognition that they are called to take an increasingly important role in the spread of the Gospel. Consequently they need to be given a suitable training for the sake of an effective apostolic activity.

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5. "God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Cor 9:7). World Mission Sunday is also an occasion to rekindle the desire and the moral obligation to take joyful part in the mission *ad gentes*. A monetary contribution on the part of individuals is the sign of a self-offering, first to the Lord and then to others; in this way a material offering can become a means for the evangelization of humanity built on love.

Dear brothers and sisters, on this World Mission Sunday my thoughts turn to all the local Churches. Let us not be robbed of the joy of evangelization! I invite you to immerse yourself in the joy of the Gospel and nurture a love that can light up your vocation and your mission. I urge each of you to recall, as if you were making an interior pilgrimage, that "first love" with which the Lord Jesus Christ warmed your heart, not for the sake of nostalgia but in order to persevere in joy. The Lord's disciples persevere in joy when they sense his presence, do his will and share with others their faith, hope and evangelical charity. Let us pray through the intercession of Mary, the model of humble and joyful evangelization, that the Church may become a welcoming home, a mother for all peoples and the source of rebirth for our world.

From the Vatican, 8 June 2014, the Solemnity of Pentecost

*Francis*