

Rediscovering mission with Pope Francis

I would like to reflect on *the missionary dimension of our Christian calling*. Those who are drawn by God's voice and who are determined to follow Jesus, soon discover within themselves an irrepressible desire to bring the Good News to their brothers and sisters through the proclamation and the service of charity. All Christians are called to be missionaries of the Gospel! As disciples, we do not receive the gift of God's love for our personal consolation, nor are we called to promote ourselves, or a business concern. We are simply men and women touched and transformed by the joy of God's love, who cannot keep this experience just to ourselves. For "the Gospel joy which enlivens the community of disciples is a missionary joy" (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 21). Commitment to the mission is not something added on to the Christian life as a kind of decoration, but is instead an essential element of faith itself. A relationship with the Lord entails being sent out into the world as prophets of his word and witnesses of his love. — **MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS FOR THE 54th WORLD DAY OF PRAYER FOR VOCATIONS**

The Christian mission might appear to be mere utopian illusion or at least something beyond our reach. Yet if we contemplate the risen Jesus walking alongside the disciples of Emmaus (cf. Lk 24:13-15), we can be filled with new confidence. In that Gospel scene, we have a true "liturgy of the street". We see that, at every step of the way, Jesus is at our side! The two disciples, overwhelmed by the scandal of the cross, return home defeated. Their hearts are broken, their hopes dashed and their dreams shattered. What does Jesus do? He walks with them. Instead of raising a wall, he opens a breach. Gradually he transforms their discouragement. He makes their hearts burn within them, and he opens their eyes by proclaiming the word and breaking the bread. In the same way, a Christian does not bear the burden of the mission alone, but realizes, even amid weariness and misunderstanding, that "Jesus walks with him, speaks to him, breathes



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with him, and works with him. He senses Jesus alive with him in the midst of the missionary enterprise" (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 266). — **MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS FOR THE 54th WORLD DAY OF PRAYER FOR VOCATIONS**

Today, we can regain fervour in preaching the Gospel and we can encourage young people in particular to take up the path of Christian discipleship. Despite a widespread sense that the faith is listless or reduced to mere "duties to discharge," our young people desire to discover the perennial attraction of Jesus, to be challenged by his words and actions, and to cherish the ideal that he holds out of a life that is fully human, happy to spend itself in love. Mary Most Holy, the Mother of our Saviour, had the courage to embrace this ideal, placing her youth and her enthusiasm in God's hands. Through her intercession, may we be granted that same openness of heart, that same readiness to respond, "Here I am", to the Lord's call, and that same joy in setting out (cf. Lk 1:39), like her, to proclaim him to the whole world. — **MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS FOR THE 54th WORLD DAY OF PRAYER FOR VOCATIONS**

As they travel through the streets of the world, the disciples of Jesus need to have a love without limits, the same measure of love that our Lord has for all people. We proclaim the most beautiful and greatest gifts that he has given us: his life and his love. All peoples and cultures have the right to receive the message of salvation, which is God's gift to every person. This is all the more necessary when



we consider how many injustices, wars, and humanitarian crises still need resolution. Missionaries know from experience that the Gospel of forgiveness and mercy can bring joy and reconciliation, justice and peace. The mandate of the Gospel to “go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you” (Mt 28:19-20) has not ceased; rather this command commits all of us, in the current landscape with all its challenges, to hear the call to a renewed missionary “impulse,” as I noted in my Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*: “Each Christian and every community must discern the path that the Lord points out, but all of us are asked to obey his call to go forth from our own comfort zone in order to reach all the ‘peripheries’ in need of the light of the Gospel” (20). — **MESSAGE OF POPE FRANCIS FOR WORLD MISSION DAY 2016**

Everyone should be able to experience the joy of being loved by God, the joy of salvation! It is a gift that one cannot keep to oneself, but it is to be shared. If we want to keep it only to ourselves, we will become isolated, sterile and sick Christians. The proclamation of the Gospel is part of being disciples of Christ and it is a constant commitment that animates the entire life of the Church. Missionary outreach is a clear sign of the maturity of an ecclesial community (BENEDICT XVI, *Verbum Domini*, 95). Each community is “mature” when it professes faith, celebrates it with joy during the liturgy, lives charity, proclaims the Word of God endlessly, leaves one’s own to take it to the “peripheries,” especially to those who have not yet had the opportunity to know Christ. The strength of our faith, at a personal and community level can be measured by the ability to communicate it to others, to spread and live it in charity, to witness to it before those we meet and those who share the path of life with us. — **MESSAGE OF POPE FRANCIS FOR WORLD MISSION DAY 2013**

“God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Cor 9:7). *World Mission Day* 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. On this *World Mission Day*, 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. — **MESSAGE OF POPE FRANCIS FOR WORLD MISSION DAY 2014**

This exodus process does not regard individuals alone, but the missionary and evangelizing activity of the whole Church. The Church is faithful to its Master to the extent that it is a Church which “goes forth,” a Church which is less concerned about itself, its structures and successes, and more about its ability to go out and meet God’s children wherever they are, to feel compassion for their hurt and pain. God goes forth from himself in a Trinitarian dynamic of love: he hears the cry of his people and he intervenes to set them free (Ex 3:7). The Church is called to follow this way of being and acting. It is meant to be a Church that evangelizes, goes out to encounter humanity, proclaims the liberating word of the Gospel, heals people’s spiritual and physical wounds with the grace of God, and offers relief to the poor and the suffering. — **MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS FOR THE 52nd WORLD DAY OF PRAYER FOR VOCATIONS**

