

Liturgy preparation notes

29th Sunday of Ordinary Time, Year B

Introduction

On World Mission Sunday we celebrate with our sisters and brothers across the world the universal salvation won by Jesus and offered to all people.

Penitential Rite

Lord Jesus, you call us to show our faith in action

Lord, have mercy

Lord Jesus, you call us to persevere through hope

Christ, have mercy

Lord Jesus, you call us to work for love

Lord, have mercy

Today's Readings

First Reading Isaiah 53:10-11

Writing of the Jews' recent experience of being crushed by exile and servitude in a foreign country, the prophet Isaiah presents such suffering as teaching a positive message, namely that the nation and/or its future leader must embrace a mission of service to others. To be the Lord's Servant and to offer up to God one's misery not only leads to the lifting of one's own burdens but it also helps others to draw near to the light.

Psalm 32:4-5, 18-20, 22

May your love be upon us, O Lord, as we place all our hope in you

Second Reading Hebrews 4:14-16

Do not be disheartened! If you feel tempted to lose faith, look to Jesus, who now, after himself undergoing temptation, sits at the Father's right hand interceding for us in our weakness.

Gospel Mark 10:35-45

James and John are ambitious to obtain privileged places in the Kingdom, and are taught that true greatness is not about power but service to others. They must learn that God's power is made perfect in weakness: their confidence that they could commit themselves fully to the imitation of Christ was abruptly disproved when, at the critical time, they all forsook him and fled (Mk 14: 50). However their failure was not terminal: James and John eventually won eternal glory, the one as a martyr, the other as a teacher.

Application - Sermon Notes

Bishop Dieter Scholz in Zimbabwe recently ordained 5 young men to the priesthood. He said: 'Like all liturgies in Africa, the ordination Mass was lavish in singing and drumming and praying. Choirs from each of the ordinands' home parishes arrived early to practise their specially composed hymns. The Mass lasted over five hours! Just before the final blessing by the Bishop and the first blessing by the new priests, the parish chairman rose to make an announcement. He brought forward an old lady of 92 and asked that she receive the blessings first, even before the new priests' parents! Why so special?

The community had been fearful that they would be unable to feed the 3,000 guests coming to the ordinations. This old lady, called Ambuya, had offered all she had: a whole sheep! As the story of her amazing gift spread others came forward with gifts of goats, oil, maize and tea. In the end there was enough to feed everybody. The chairman said, "You made our feast possible, Ambuya. You changed us all. That is why you deserve to be blessed first." And so she was.'

Using this and other stories of the Church in India and Africa (found on the back page of the folder), we can show that the challenge of mission is as vital to the life of the Church of our day as it ever was. At the heart of that mission is the simple command – **reach out with love!**

A life of dedication to the needs of others, although it will include times of struggle even of suffering, in the end will be fruitful. Even the strongest among us can flag from time to time, to lose heart and to wonder if our efforts are being wasted. Such self-questioning is natural, but the Christian gospel contains much that can re-invigorate us and give purpose to our mission.

The eloquent teaching of Hebrews lifts our spirits: since Jesus shares our humanity and was himself tempted, we can in our weakness approach with confidence the throne of grace; when we need help, we shall not ask in vain. Mark's story is equally encouraging. The fact that divisions opened up even among the apostles is sobering, but it shows us that we need not be fearful of tensions in today's church. The sons of Zebedee, rightly venerated as saints, are here portrayed as very much like ourselves. Ambition to be and to do better than others, and over-confidence in one's own strength - such human failings certainly run counter to the Gospel, but after all it is frail human beings that God chooses to continue his mission in the world. James and John learned the hard way that one has to rely on a power higher than oneself.

The sons of Zebedee, James, the martyr and John, the teacher, baptised with the baptism of Jesus will both drink the cup of Jesus. It is clear that suffering is part of the common lot of disciples in whatever field their mission lies.

Key themes and summary:

- The cost of discipleship and of sharing in Jesus' mission
- Christian leadership involves self-sacrificial service of others
- We must not over-estimate our own strength but rely on the might of the Lord
- The struggle of growth in the new Churches is an invitation to us to 'share their cup'
- In Jesus, our shared weakness is redemptive of the whole community
- Mission is a shared task and we all bring to it our different talents and traditions
- The new missionary churches have a right to our support and prayer

Intercessions

Celebrant

Father of all, confident of your love for the Church and world, we commend our cares and concerns to your generous mercy.

Intercessions

- That our Holy Father, Benedict XVI, may continue to guide the Church to proclaim the compassion of Jesus to a fragmented world. *Lord, in your mercy ...*
- That the Bishops in Africa, meeting in their synod, may respond with courage to the challenges of inter-tribal warfare and mistrust. May they inspire their people to reach out with love and hope. *Lord, in your mercy ...*
- That the new Churches, especially in Africa and Asia, may continue to build their lives in active faith, persevering hope and self-giving love. *Lord, in your mercy ...*
- That missionaries everywhere may proclaim the Gospel message with courage and sensitivity. *Lord, in your mercy ...*
- That the prayers of the sick may be a source of strength and encouragement for missionaries especially in difficult areas. *Lord, in your mercy ...*

Celebrant

Father, we thank you for the gift of prayer, of opening our hearts and minds to you. As we pray for the grace to be fervent missionaries, we ask you to grant these and all our prayers in the name of Jesus, who is Lord for ever and ever.

Final Blessing

May the mission of Jesus be our constant hope
 May the Lord help us to reach out with love
 May he grant us the strength to proclaim his Good News



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