

Holy Father's message for World Mission Sunday in full



Holy Father's Message for World Mission Sunday 2011

Below is the complete message for World Mission Sunday 2011 which this year falls on 23 October. The text has been translated from the original by Fides which is the official mission news agency of the Catholic Church www.fides.org

As the Father has sent me, so I send you (Jn 20:21)

On the occasion of the Jubilee of the year 2000 Venerable John Paul II, at the beginning of a new millennium of the Christian era, forcefully confirmed the necessity of renewing the commitment to bring the Gospel proclamation to all with "the enthusiasm of the very first Christians" (Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 58). It is the most precious service that the Church can render to humanity and to every individual seeking profound reasons for living his or her existence to the full. Therefore that same invitation is re-presented every year in the celebration of World Mission Sunday. In fact the ceaseless proclamation of the Gospel also revitalises the Church, her fervour, her apostolic spirit; it renews her pastoral methods so that they may be ever more suited to new situations – also those that require a new evangelization – and animated by missionary thrust: "Missionary activity renews the Church, revitalizes faith and Christian identity, and offers fresh enthusiasm and new incentive. Faith is strengthened when it is given to others! It is in commitment to the Church's universal mission that the new evangelization of Christian peoples will find inspiration and support" (JOHN PAUL II, Enc. *Redemptoris Missio*, 2).

Go and proclaim

This objective is constantly renewed by the celebration of the liturgy, particularly by the celebration of the Eucharist, which always ends by reiterating the risen Jesus' command to the Apostles: "Go..." (Mt 28:19). The Liturgy is always a call 'from the world' and a new sending 'into the world' to bear witness to what one has experienced: the salvific power of the Word of God, the salvific power of Christ's Paschal Mystery. All those who have met the risen Lord have felt the need to proclaim him to others, as did the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. After recognising the Lord in the breaking of bread, they "set out that instant and returned to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven assembled" and told them what had happened to them on the road (Lk 24:33-34). Pope John Paul II exhorted us to be "watchful, ready to recognize his face and run to our brothers and sisters with the good news: 'We have seen the Lord!'" (Ap. Letter, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 59).

To all

The beneficiaries of the Gospel proclamation are all peoples. The Church "is missionary by her very nature, since it is from the mission of the Son and the mission of the Holy Spirit that she draws her origin, in accordance with the decree of God the Father" (ECUM. COUNCIL VATICAN II, Decr. *Ad Gentes*, 2). This is "the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity. She exists in order to evangelise" (PAUL VI, Ap. Ex. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 14). Consequently, she can never withdraw into herself. She is rooted in particular places in order to go beyond them. Her action, in obedience to Christ's command and under the influence of his grace and his love, becomes fully and truly present to all men and women and to all peoples in order to lead them to faith in Christ (cf. *Ad Gentes*, 5). This task has not lost any of its urgency. Indeed, "the mission of Christ the Redeemer, which is entrusted to the Church, is still very far from completion.... An overall view of the human race shows that this mission is still only beginning and that we must commit ourselves wholeheartedly to its service" (JOHN PAUL II, Enc. *Redemptoris Missio*, 1). We cannot be content when we consider that, after two thousand years, there are still peoples who do not know Christ and have not yet heard his Message of salvation.

Not only this: but there is an ever greater number of people who, although having received the proclamation of the Gospel, have forgotten it or abandoned it and no longer associate with the Church; and many sectors, even in traditionally Christian societies are today reluctant to open to the word of faith. Cultures are changing, nourished also by globalisation, by movements of thought and by the prevailing relativism, a change that leads to a mentality and a life-style that disregard the gospel Message, as if God did not exist, and that exalt the search for well-being, easy money, a career and success as the aim of life, even to the detriment of moral values.

The joint responsibility of all

The universal mission involves everyone, everything and always. The Gospel is not an exclusive possession of those who have received it, but it is a gift to be shared, good news to be passed on to others. And this gift-commitment is entrusted not only to some, but to all the baptised, who are “a chosen race ... a holy nation, God’s own people” (1 Pt 2:9), in order that they may proclaim his marvellous works.

All activities are also involved in this. The Church’s attention and cooperation in missionary activity in the world cannot be limited to some particular moments or occasions, nor can they be considered as one of many pastoral activities: the Church’s missionary dimension is essential; therefore it must always be kept in mind. It is important that both individual baptised persons and ecclesial communities should be involved not only spasmodically and occasionally in mission, but constantly, as a way of Christian life. World Mission Sunday is not an isolated moment in the year, but a precious occasion for pausing to reflect on whether and how we respond to the missionary vocation: an essential response for the life of the Church.

Global evangelisation

Evangelization is a complex process and includes various elements. Among these, in missionary animation particular attention has always been given to solidarity. This is also one of the objectives of World Mission Sunday, which, through the Pontifical Mission Societies (Missio in England and Wales), appeals for help to carry out evangelising activities in mission territories. It involves supporting institutions necessary for establishing and consolidating the Church through catechists, seminaries, priests; and also giving one’s own contribution to improve the living conditions of people in nations where poverty, malnutrition, above all infantile malnutrition, diseases, lack of health care services and education are most serious. This, too, is part of the Church’s mission. Proclaiming the Gospel she takes human life to heart in the fullest sense. It is unacceptable, the Servant of God Paul VI declared, that in evangelization the themes of human promotion, justice, liberation from every form of oppression, obviously with respect for the autonomy of the political sphere, should be neglected. To ignore the temporal problems of humanity would be “to forget the lesson which comes to us from the Gospel concerning love of our neighbour who is suffering and in need” (Ap. Exhortation Evangelii Nuntiandi, 31.34); it would be inconsistent with the behaviour of Jesus, who “went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the good news of the Kingdom, and curing every disease and every sickness” (Mt 9:35).

Therefore through co-responsible participation in the Church’s mission, the Christian becomes a builder of communion, of peace and of the solidarity that Christ has given us, and he or she collaborates in fulfilling God’s plan of salvation for all humanity. The challenges it meets call Christians to journey together with others, and mission is an integral part of this journey with all. In it, albeit in clay pots, we bring our Christian vocation, the priceless treasure of the Gospel, the living witness to Jesus dead and risen, met and believed in the Church.

May World Mission Sunday reawaken in each person the joy and desire to “go” out to meet humanity taking Christ to all. In his name I wholeheartedly impart my Apostolic Blessing, especially on those who toil and suffer most for the Gospel.

From the Vatican, 6 January 2011, the Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord.
Benedictus PP XVI

