

## Prayers of the faithful

### Celebrant

Today in Word and Sacrament we remind ourselves of our missionary responsibility, and we pray for our sisters and brothers who have dedicated themselves to spreading the faith throughout the world.

### Intercessions

1. We pray for Benedict our Pope and all our bishops. May they lead us to a deeper missionary commitment to spreading the Gospel.
2. We pray for our sisters and brothers who give their lives in other countries, cultures and traditions, discovering how best to preach the Word of God in a meaningful and powerful way.
3. We pray for our young people. May the Gospel of Jesus inspire them to speak the truth in the world in which they live.
4. We remember all those who suffer for their faith. May the Holy Spirit guide and strengthen them through the compassion of others and their own deep faith in the Lord.
5. We pray for those who have died, marked by the sign of faith, particularly those who have rejoiced in being missionaries.

### Celebrant

Loving God, you invite us to share the mission of Jesus your Son to the whole world. Give us the courage and enthusiasm we need to work together for the coming of your kingdom. We make this prayer...

## Final Blessing

May the mission of Jesus be our constant joy

May the Lord help us to share our faith with hope

May he grant us the grace to proclaim his Good News with courage

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# World Mission Sunday 2011

## LITURGY PREPARATION NOTES

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**22/23 October 2011**

**30th Sunday of Ordinary Time, Year A**

### Introduction

We gather in Word and Sacrament and remember the Lord's commission to share the Good News of Jesus in the way we live. The Lord tells us that we are a missionary people who reach out in love to those, throughout the world, who are hungry for a message of faith and hope. As we begin let us ask forgiveness for those times we have ignored his command.

### Penitential Rite

Lord Jesus, in your love you take the side of the weak and the sinner;  
Lord, have mercy

Lord Jesus, you give us your Spirit to lead us and inspire us with joy and enthusiasm;  
Christ, have mercy

Lord Jesus, your Spirit goes before us, urging us to love others especially the stranger  
in our midst;  
Lord, have mercy

### Today's Readings

**First Reading** Exodus 22: 20 – 26

One of the major themes in Exodus is Liberation. God sees the misery of his people in Egypt and through Moses intervenes to set them free. There can be no freedom without commitment to justice; rights and duties are the two sides of the same coin.

**Second Reading:** 1 Thessalonians 1: 5 – 10

The apostle Paul lived what he preached. His authentic missionary presence among the people of Thessalonica proved very fruitful. Following his example they in turn reached out to others. We also are challenged to reach out to others by the way we live our faith.

**Gospel:** Matthew 22: 34 – 40

The heart of mission is love: love of God and love of neighbour. The commandment to love has its roots deep in the Old Testament. Jesus quotes the *Shema* in answer to the questioning of the Pharisees.

## Application - Homily Notes

We often think of mission in terms of the geographical expansion of the Church – as mission overseas. In this age of globalisation that notion has been overtaken by an awareness - and reality- of Christian presence everywhere on the planet. Of course, the distribution of Christians is very uneven; in many countries, particularly in Asia, Christians are a tiny minority; in Africa there has been an explosive growth over the past half century, and in Europe secularisation is a major challenge.

This highlights the reality that far from being accomplished, mission is as important and relevant as ever. Blessed Pope John Paul II said, 'We have entered a new era of mission'. Mission, we now recognise, is everywhere, at our doorstep as well as in distant countries. More importantly, through the teachings of the Second Vatican Council and the encyclical *Redemptoris Missio*, we have come to realise more clearly that Mission lies at the heart of the Church. The Church *is* mission; and the mission of the Church is rooted in the Gospel itself.

'Go therefore ...' this is Jesus' great commission. But mission is much more than obedience to a command from the Lord. Look at St Paul and the Acts of the Apostles. Mission in the New Testament begins with a kind of explosion of joy! They cannot contain themselves - there are hints of that in today's second reading.

Nowhere do we hear Paul tell his readers that they ought to be active in mission. For himself it is simply inconceivable that he should remain silent: 'Woe to me if I do not proclaim the gospel!' (1Cor 9: 16) His example was naturally contagious and the communities he founded felt impelled to share with others what they had received.

In the death and resurrection of Jesus the true meaning of history has been disclosed and this cannot be kept under wraps: it needs to be shared universally. History is given its meaning by what God has done in Jesus Christ and by what he has promised to do. To be baptised is to be incorporated into the dying of Jesus so as to become a participant in his risen life, and so to share in his ongoing mission to the world: we are baptised into his mission.

This is crucial: *His* mission. It is absolutely essential to recognise that it remains his mission. There is a temptation to 'believe our own publicity' - to emphasise numbers, expansion of the Church, our own contribution or what has been accomplished in the name of mission: education and development, medical care. Important as these are as an expression of mission, we must not lose sight of the fact that the Holy Spirit is the source of all mission.

The Spirit precedes the missionary wherever he goes. It is only in faithfulness to Jesus that the missionary becomes the place where the Spirit speaks and acts.

At its deepest level mission is an expression of hope; there is a real future for us and for the world. It is also an expression of love which today's gospel makes very clear. Love, of course, is empty of meaning unless it finds expression in concrete works of justice and reconciliation. 'All that the Lord has said we shall do and hear.' (Ex 24: 7) 'Doing' takes precedence over 'hearing'!

A rabbi was once asked, 'In the past it was seemingly easy to believe in God; why has it become so difficult nowadays?' He answered, 'Because people do not want to stoop so low anymore.' God in the Old Testament bends low. He can no longer stomach the oppression his people are suffering. Jesus identifies with the outcast and sinners. What does the Spirit impel *us* to do?