



A call to Mission

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A few weeks ago we were reminded at Mass that we all have an obligation to serve the Lord in some capacity. This concept is reinforced every few weeks as together at Mass we say in the prayer for vocations: *"By Baptism and Confirmation you have called all of us to build up your holy Church."* But what does that mean for you and me as ordinary Catholics in the 21st Century?

Relationship

Traditionally, we as Catholic laypersons, have viewed evangelization as being primarily the role of the priests, religious, and those few chosen 'others' who have had some kind of special training. Many of us have held the perception that we, as the laity, were expected to attend Mass on Sundays, say our prayers, receive the sacraments, and bring up our children as Catholics. There didn't seem to be an expectation that we would have such a living and vital relationship with God that it would compel us to share it with others. Spirituality was often a private thing, just between us and God.

Jesus, however, offers us more than that. He offers us a relationship so vital and exciting that we are compelled to share it with others, giving praise to our God who has done such marvellous things for us. Our response should be the same as that of Jesus' disciples in Luke 19:37-40: *"As he was now approaching the path down from the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the deeds of power that they had seen, saying, 'Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest heaven!'"*

The role of the laity

Both the second Vatican council and several encyclicals have also affirmed the role of the laity in the evangelization of the world. In the Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity from the Second Vatican Council we read: *"The Laity derive the right and the duty with respect to the apostolate, from their union with Christ as their head. Incorporated into Christ's Mystical Body through baptism and strengthened by the power of the Holy Spirit through confirmation, they are assigned to the apostolate by the Lord Himself."* Jesus also affirms this in John 15:14, *"You are my friends if you do what I command you."* And He commands us in Mark 16:15 *"Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation."*

As laypersons it is our duty, therefore, to proclaim the good news to our brothers and sisters and the greatness of the one who is the author and creator of everything around us. We can no longer sit on the sidelines and leave it up to the organized 'Church' to do.

Not me!

There are those who will say, "I could never do that, I wouldn't even know how to start." However, in Ephesians 4:11-13 we are promised: *"The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ."* God has equipped each of us with the talents and the grace that we need to carry his message to others, all He asks is that we listen to Him and remain open to His leading. The awesomeness of God's ability to work through our brokenness, our feelings of inadequacy, and our imperfections, makes me realize just what a mighty God we serve.

The message

As the bearers of Christ's message to our brothers and sisters, we will receive that peace that passes all understanding. In addition, we are also privileged to enjoy the fruits of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Most importantly, we are promised in Galatians 6:8-10: *"If you sow to the Spirit you will reap eternal life from the Spirit. So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest time, if we do not give up. So then, whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all, especially for those of the family of faith."*

Do you realize what a powerful message it is that we have been entrusted to bring to others? Jesus tells us in John 10:10 that *"I have come that they may have life, and have it abundantly."* And, in John 1:12 we read: *"But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God."* We come as heralds of the gift of eternal life to our brothers and sisters that we meet along our way. When we share with them the good news of Jesus Christ, they too can become heirs with Christ, they too can share in the fruits of the Spirit, and they too can receive that peace that passes all understanding. Lives are changed,

relationships are healed, and the kingdom of God is advanced!

Conclusion

One of my all-time favourite Bible passages is the story of the road to Emmaus from Luke's Gospel. We pick up on the story just after the disciples have finished telling Jesus their tale of woe and expressing their discouragement. Then Jesus said to them, *"Oh how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?"* Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures. As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. But they urged him strongly, saying, *"Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over."* So he went in to stay with them. When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, *"Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was*

opening the scriptures to us?" That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem.

The verse in this passage that always catches me is *"Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?"* As we have so often heard, the disciples in this passage were headed the wrong way, away from Jerusalem, away from the outpouring of the Holy Spirit that was soon to come. Jesus appeared to these disciples and through His walking with them and sharing with them, He caused them to do an about face and head back to Jerusalem by sharing the Good News with them.

St. Teresa has said that we are to be the hands, feet, and body of Christ in our world, to carry on the work that He started. Our mission then, as ordinary Catholic laypersons, is to bring the Good News to our brothers and sisters, to walk along that road to Emmaus with them, and by sharing with them the hope and joy that we have received in the Good News of the Gospel message, we can then help point them in the right direction. God Bless!

"Either we believe in God or we do not"



For those who do not believe in God, they need not worship, they need not pray, they need not pay and they need not obey. However they will have to answer some fundamental questions:

1. Where does man come from?
2. Who made the earth we live on?
3. Who made the universe?
4. Who made the laws of nature that we must obey?
5. Who gives us oxygen?
6. Who provides fresh water?
7. Who provides the oceans?

Oxygen is so important that the body if deprived for ten minutes will be brain dead and water if deprived for a couple of days we are dehydrated.

Careless mankind is threatening all these gifts by competing and confusing opinions, selfish excesses and lack of care for the needy.

If we say we believe in God, let us check our behaviour: Do we communicate with God in worship and prayer and listening? Perhaps the greatest challenge to our faith is our behaviour. The fundamental law of religion is to love God and to love our neighbours. It sounds so simple and yet so hard to do. And perhaps our main problems are pride and selfishness. Our proud disobedience leads us to self indulgence particularly in our present society by promiscuous sexual indulgence. Our relationship to our neighbours as governed by the law of love, to love our neighbours as ourselves. That is the key. A clear picture of our failure to love our neighbours is in the violence. Violence could be visible in our home, at school or at work between racial groups or social neighbours or neighbour countries. A person who believes in God will be a gentleman and teach his children gentleness — the sign of a child of God.