

Twenty-Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time
October 20, 2024

Today's World Mission Sunday. The Church, according to Vatican Council II, is "missionary" in her very nature because her founder, Jesus Christ, was the first missionary. God the Father sent God the Son, Incarnate in Jesus, His Christ, into the world with a message of God's love and salvation.

Thus, the evangelizing mission of the Church is essentially the announcement of God's love, mercy, forgiveness, and salvation. How then can we evangelize? I can think of three ways: By living an exemplary and transparent Christian life, by prayer, and by financial support.

The theme chosen for this year is "*Go and invite everyone to the banquet (Matt 22:9)*". It's important to note that the mission of the Church is not confined to priests and nuns but it is a mission for everybody who received the light of the Easter candle at their baptism.

In light of this donations are collected at masses and they go, in their entirety, to support churches, hospitals, schools and vocations in countries where the Church is new, young or poor. Every year most of the American Dioceses invite poor Dioceses from the missions, Ghana included, to come and solicit for funds to build churches, hospitals, training of priests etc.

As I often tell the churches I visit in this Diocese every year for our Mission Coop program, "not all of us will have the opportunity to serve or evangelize in the Mission field, but the good thing is that our moneys can work for us. So I'm encouraging you to give whenever you have the chance to support the missions.

My dear friends, I think you'll agree with me that if you've ever hurt someone in a serious way you know that it's a pretty bad feeling. And it's

especially hard if that person is someone you truly care about, truly respect, truly love. In these cases, of course, we want nothing more than to be able to take it back or to undo whatever it is we have done. But we can't. And so there really is only one recourse. We must ask for forgiveness.

And that's not easy either. It's often one of the hardest things to do. We're going to have to revisit something painful. We're going to have to make sure we say the right things and not the wrong things. We're going to want to make all sorts of excuses for what we've done, but we know that that will just make things worse, and won't be a true act of contrition at all. And if the wrongdoing is serious enough, we might even rehearse what we're going to say and precisely how we are going to say it.

And somehow, after all that, we're hoping for one thing in particular, one particular outcome. We're hoping that somehow the person we have wronged will be completely understanding of our faults and failings, be understanding of the fact that we are not perfect, that we will always make mistakes, always mess up. We know that's really the only way the healing can begin.

**“For we do not have a high priest
who is unable
to sympathize with our weaknesses, . . .”**

That's what we just heard from the author of the Letter to the Hebrews. And that's a powerful consequence of the Incarnation. Our God doesn't understand us from afar, from without. He actually understands us from within, from walking the same journey. Our God knows us. Our God has had experiences that we have had. Our God identifies with us. Our God understands us. It's profound when you think about it.

And I'm not just talking about all the good stuff. I'm not just saying that God understands our qualities and achievements and gifts and virtues. No, it's much more than that. God understands all the stuff we are not proud

of. Our faults. Our selfishness. Our weak will. Our seeming powerlessness in the face of temptations. Our failures. Yes, even our sin.

That means that God doesn't have unrealistic expectations for us. He hopes for the best. He desires the best. He knows the good we are capable of. But he also knows our plight, our circumstances, our mixed motives, our fallen world. And that should truly be great a comfort to us.

God is sort of like a treasured friend who is willing to accept our apology in the deepest, most sincere kind of way, a way that says, "I love you, and I'm okay with you not being perfect." That's the kind of friend who truly understands our faults and understands the challenges that often come with trying to do the right thing. And you know what? That's exactly the God we have.

The question is, can we be that person for others?

If we can't, we run the risk of becoming like people described in today's Gospel passage from St. Mark. You see, once we find it impossible to understand the weaknesses of others, what we're really revealing is that we've lost sight of our own limitations, our own faults, our own sin.

We've become people convinced of our own goodness, our own entitlement, our own importance. We've become, in a very real sense, people wanting to be served, not serve, wanting to be first, not last, wanting the glory, but not the sacrifice that goes along with it.

Put simply, when that happens, when we think and act that way, we become the exact opposite of what our Lord Jesus taught us, showed us, embodied for us. And that's not good.

It takes true humility to live this out in our day-to-day lives. It takes humility to admit that OUR faults and failings contribute to the world not being the beautiful place God created it to be. It takes humility to admit that the person we hope to be is not the person we are. It takes humility to admit that the face we show others often doesn't match the reality we

hide from them. And it takes humility to use our awareness of our own weaknesses and sin as a reason for forgiving those same things in others.

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So let's stop adopting a "How could you?" type of attitude. Rather, let's adopt an "I understand" type of attitude, recognizing the shortcomings, weaknesses and failings of others as simply reflections of those same sorts of failings in ourselves. Our God sees us that way. He understands our imperfections and even our sin. May we see each other that same way, and thereby build a kinder, more compassionate, more forgiving world.