

***Twenty-ninth Sunday Per Annum (A) World Mission Sunday
October 19, 2014.***

Worship the Lord in holy splendour; tremble before Him all the earth. Say among the nations, 'The Lord is King! He will judge the peoples with equity' (Ps. 96).

Today is World Mission Sunday and Catholics throughout the whole world are invited to pray and sacrifice for the mission of the Church. Today, even the poorest parishes around the world give from their poverty to support the propagation of the Gospel. The Society for the Propagation of the Faith reminds us this year that *every disciple is a missionary*. The mission of the Church, like that of our Lord Himself, is essentially to speak of God, to acknowledge His sovereignty, and to remind everyone of God's sovereignty over what belongs to Him, which is our lives. Though this is a self-evident truth for we did not make ourselves, the idea of God's sovereignty is an absurd concept for many in the secularised context in which we live and in which we must bear witness to the faith. Likewise, the relativist belief that all cultures are the same and that no belief system is superior to another, make the idea of missionary outreach offensive, a form of cultural imperialism, as it were. Nevertheless, faith and belief are essential to human life. Even the person who professes to have no religious belief or faith is guided by a vision or ideology, even if it be irreligious. The facility with which ideas are shared and propagated makes ours a culture of competing ideologies and by consequence, competing anthropologies; that is, different approaches to the mystery and reality of the human person. It would seem that especially in what concerns the human person, our nature, our purpose and our destiny, the world is suffering from what can only be described as a *diabolical disorientation*. The devil, *diabolos*, is literally, one who sows confusion, and the effects of this confusion are everywhere to be seen; the casualties are legion. The reduction of the human person solely to the material or the physical is a powerful force to contend with; and even more insidiously dangerous is the reduction of the individual exclusively to one's sexual function or orientation, in a cultural context that refuses to recognise the immutability of human nature. It is a recipe for chaos. It is in this milieu that we must bear witness to the truth of the Gospel; the Gospel of Life that liberates man from the darkness of ignorance and error, for knowledge precedes conduct. Our world needs the truth of Christ.

The Christian faith that we profess and endeavour to live provides us with a comprehensive vision or understanding that encompasses God and man and all of reality. *I believe in one God, the Father Almighty* are the first words of our profession of faith. It is our Lord Jesus Christ who reveals to us the truth about God and He does this not as a distant historical figure but as the living God present and living among us in the living Word of the Gospel and most especially in His Eucharistic Presence. The Gospels clearly illustrate that our Lord's earthly life consists in being the one sent by the Father, in being totally relative to Him, completely determined by obedience to Him. We also learn from the Gospels that our Lord's manner of entering into relation with people and things was shaped by the acknowledgment of the place that the Father had assigned them. We who bear His Name are also sent and do likewise, for *every disciple is a missionary*.

There is a divinely established order that governs the world and this order reflects a logic that we are not permitted to pervert without dire consequences. Sadly, recent human history is a chronicle of attempts to usurp God's established order especially as this pertains to life and life's purpose and

meaning. In all such attempts it is the weak and vulnerable who suffer most. As our nation once again debates the alleged “merits” of assisted suicide, we are reminded of the necessity of our faithful witness to the Gospel of Life. G. K. Chesterton observed that *the Catholic Church is the only thing that saves man from the degrading slavery of being a child of his age*. St Paul reminds us that the mission of the Church in which we share is always the same in every age: *Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect (Rom. 12:2)*. The renewal of our mind is quite simply our willingness to be engaged by the truth of Christ at every stage of life’s journey. This truth is challenging but transformative and the transformation that it effects is comprehensive, affecting both mind and heart.

Christian life, the life that we are endeavouring to live, is a progressive identification with the life of Jesus. This is why before we proclaim the Gospel to others we first proclaim it to ourselves. We meditate on it, here in the sacred assembly (*synaxis*) and the Gospel also nurtures our personal prayer. Christian life is the *personal* relationship with Jesus that culminates in union with Him through grace, love and imitation. We can affirm unequivocally that following Christ along the path of devout humility, the path of discipleship, is the greatest good for man. The witness of history attests to this. The human rights and freedoms that we cherish and uphold are not extraneous to the Christian understanding of the human person in relation to God, oneself, others and the world; they are born of the Gospel. Outside of this Christian logic however, freedom becomes licence; a self-destructive pursuit of an elusive fulfillment that ends only in frustration and what is worse, the loss of oneself. When authentically lived, Christian faith and life provide us with a comprehensive understanding of ourselves and the world around us. Necessarily, this begins with our very self because what we say about human nature determines what direction our lives will take. Human nature, it must be said, is immutable in itself and it is governed by natural law. When this truth is respected, the gift of grace enhances and perfects our nature. When this truth is denied or violated grace is obstructed and we easily become slaves to our passions, our ignorance, and our vices. The gift of grace that is ours in Christ Jesus who shares our human nature, and the progressive identification with the life of Jesus that is the essence of our discipleship, these enable us to experience the indwelling of the Trinity; a foretaste of the eternal life that God offers us in Christ our Lord. Our Lord Himself said: *If a man loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him (Jn. 14:23)*.

In Christ our Saviour, the Father continues to offer to humanity a purposeful and meaningful life; an ordered life governed by a logic that engages all our human faculties and our bodies no less. These are perfected by grace and Christian life culminates in the Trinitarian Love that embraces the whole of the reality of God and the human being, of heaven and earth, of the Church and of the world. On this Mission Sunday, we are especially aware that Christian discipleship is also a participation in our Lord’s mission to the world. Christian life is a call to holiness; a call experienced as the profound desire of the human heart to enter into intimate communion with the Heart of God. This communion presupposes fidelity to the Law of God, both divine and natural. In this divine economy, we render *to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s (Mt. 22:21)*. We therefore pray today that we may persevere in the profession of our Catholic faith. We also ask our Heavenly Father to give us the grace to bear witness to the reality of His Love at work in our lives through the work of faith, the labour of love and the steadfastness of hope (Cf. *1 Thes. 1:4*).