

**October 21, 2018
29th Sunday in Ordinary Time**

Mission Sunday

**Whoever wishes to be great among you will be your servant,
for the Son of Man did not come to be served,
but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many**

One of the conditions of encountering God has always been a willingness to let go of what we thought we knew in order to appreciate what we had never dreamed of.

Today is Mission Sunday which was begun by Pope Pius XI in 1926. Mission Sunday encourages help in mission fields as well as reminds us of the missionary character of our baptism. The theme this year for Mission Sunday is, "*Together with young people, let us bring the Gospel to all.*" Each one of us is on mission on this earth.

Pope Francis urges people, especially young people, not to be afraid of Christ and his Church, because it is where '*we find the treasure that fills life with joy.*' The Church's mission is infectious with love; where joy and enthusiasm spread the faith "by attraction," even in hostile and indifferent areas on the earth.

Last Monday, I went to visit the Cedar Sinai Rehabilitation Center in Beaverton where I spent some time last April. I have felt this drawing ever since to return. It brought back life-changing memories for me, one being the care the staff showed me. I was not disappointed. One of the young staff who cared for me emailed me later to say, "*I often wonder how my work impacts those I help. Seeing you today was a great example of why I love being a therapist!*" As Francis says the Church's mission is infectious with love, where joy and enthusiasm spread the faith "by attraction" - a beautiful example of what being missioned is like. Each one of us is a mission on this earth.

Jesuit Fr. Bill Ameche from California told me at Jesuit High in Beaverton last Monday night that his new assignment up here is to develop missionary catechists in the Hispanic communities to bring the joy and enthusiasm of the faith to others Hispanic communities in the valley. The heart of the Church's mission is infectious with love, where joy and enthusiasm spread the faith "by attraction" - a beautiful example of what being missioned is like. Each one of us is a mission on this earth.

Pope Francis in a recent visit to Jesuits from Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia said: "*I believe the Lord wants a change in the church.*" A young Jesuit priest asked the pope what they could do to help him. Thanking the priest, the pope said, "*I don't know what to ask from you specifically, but*

what needs to be done today is to accompany the church in a deep spiritual renewal," specifying that "a perversion of the church institution today is clericalism."

Another young Jesuit asked how are we to face people's suffering and the chaos of the world without being afraid? Francis answered, *"If you go into chaos by yourself, you're right to be afraid, for it will finish badly. But if we enter into this broken world, inspired not by our own desires, but led there by God, there is no need to be afraid because 'God is strong. God is the strongest!'"* What Francis said to those Jesuits applies to all of us - you and me. We should never be afraid of descending into the hell that people face. We need to go there, we need to be there - to touch their wounds, to help them carry their pain. In touching their wounds and ours, we touch the wounds of Christ.

Sometimes we find hell in our Church. The Church herself is a mission field. On Friday, October 18th and 19th, in one publication alone, there were these headlines:

- † San Diego gay church worker resigns after months of harassment
- † Reporting from Rome on the synod regarding the rights of women in the Church
- † Lawsuit asks Illinois dioceses to release names of accused priests
- † Archbishop Vigano says the Vatican's rebuke of him proves truth of ex-Cardinal McCarrick cover-up by the pope
- † Seton Hall president decries verbal abuse of seminarians
- † Federal government launches investigation into Pennsylvania dioceses
- † Pope says God wants change in church stricken by perversion of clericalism

Struggles in our Church may seem new, but they're not. It's just that our instant media makes us instantly aware of them. The Church has always been a mission field. *"Ecclesia semper reformanda"* - the church is always in need of reform.

The reality of struggle in our Church is not a reason to *abandon* our Church, they are a reason to *go* to her, to *run* to her, to touch her wounds and pray for God's mercy on her and on ourselves. We should never be afraid of descending into the hell we face there. In touching their and our wounds, we touch the wounds of Christ.

This is Mission Sunday! As Pope Francis urges: *"Do not be afraid of Christ and his Church, because it is where we find the treasure that fills life with joy."* Christ's mission is infectious with love, where joy and enthusiasm spread the faith *"by attraction,"* even in the sometimes hostile and indifferent environment in our Church. Being in mission is not a religious profession, it is a way of life.

Let us come together, all of us, to seek healing, to see what God has in mind for us. As Karen Armstrong says, *"One of the conditions of encountering God has always been a willingness to let go of what we thought we knew in order to appreciate what we had never dreamed of."*

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**Whoever wishes to be great among you will be your servant,
for the Son of Man did not come to be served,
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*Let us work with compassion for renewal in our world, in our Church,
and in ourselves as if our lives depend on it.*