

## Homily Helps

### Reflections on the readings for the Twenty-Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time

**October 10, 2021:** Wis 7:7-11; PS 90: 12-13, 14-17; Heb 4: 12-13; Mk 10: 17-30

#### **Everyone who follows Christ must let go to experience true charity.**

This Sunday's Gospel, as well as in the upcoming Sundays in October, focus on what it means to be a true follower of Christ. The Gospel starts with a fine and respected man of the community coming to Jesus. He was interested specifically in the question concerning destiny. He framed the question this way: *What must I do to inherit eternal life?* In the process of answering that question, Jesus gave him insight concerning what or who really matters most in life. And, like the man in the Gospel, what you decide now will determine where you go later. The questions connect and so do the answers.

This part of the Gospel addresses the important question, who or what should have priority in my life? We know the basic biblical truth that Jesus demands that people give him priority in their lives above all else and all others Col. 1:18. He is to be first. He is to have the preeminence.

A cursory reading of Mark 8: 31-10: 52 reveals much about this Gospel. The Disciples, like us, are struggling students who can't quite grasp what Jesus is saying. The verses immediately preceding our text help our understanding of this particular event. Jesus has told them those who enter the kingdom of God must be like a little child. Mt 10: 13-16 All must come to Jesus with nothing, as a trusting and helpless child in total dependence on Him. No one can earn the kingdom. The requirement is the same for all—simple child-like reliance on Jesus is how one inherits eternal life. It is that easy!

To accept God's gift of eternal life, we must be dependent on Him. We can't be the one in control. This is what Jesus is telling the rich man today. Jesus says that if he wants to have a deeper relationship with God – if he wants to go *"all in"* – then he must let go of his wealth. When Jesus tells the rich man to give everything he has to the poor and follow him, he is asking him to trust God completely. By giving away his earthly treasure, the rich man will find an even greater treasure. Jesus wasn't making a bargain with the man. The *"letting go"* is the only way to experience true charity and giving of self. This is the love that God wants us to experience with one another, this is true discipleship.

On the weekend of October 24, we celebrate World Mission Sunday. The theme for this year comes from the Acts of the Apostles 4:20: *"We cannot but speak about what we have seen and heard."* This was said by John and Peter after healing and preaching in the name of Jesus. They had been threatened by the same Sanhedrin that arranged the arrest and crucifixion of Christ. John would spend the rest of his life sharing the Good News with others. Peter would lead the Church in its difficult early days, until he died for his faith. They gave up everything as our Lord asked. It took them time to grasp what it can mean to be a Christian. Now it is up to us to understand and accept everything our life of faith entails—*like a child with total trust in Our Lord.*

To be on Mission is to be willing to think as Christ does, to believe with Him that those around us are also my brothers and sisters. May His compassionate love touch our hearts and make us all true Missionary disciples, especially in this, the celebration of the 110th Anniversary of the *Pontifical Mission Societies*. With your prayers and support over these 110 years, you have answered the call and helped Missionaries and the people they serve around the world.

*"Fill us with your love, O Lord, that all our days we may sing for joy!"* Psalm 90: 14



**PONTIFICAL MISSION SOCIETIES**

## Homily Helps

### Reflections on the readings for the Twenty-Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time

**October 17, 2021:** Is 53: 10-11; PS 33: 4-5, 18-19, 20, 22; Heb 4: 14-16; Mk 10: 35-45

#### **Everyone who follows Christ must learn the meaning of sacrifice.**

As on recent Sundays, today's readings focus on what it means to be a true follower of Christ. The Gospel starts with two of Jesus' closest disciples, James and John. It is very apparent how much they have yet to learn about discipleship. Instead of understanding that Jesus is calling each of us to serve and do so humbly, James and John push themselves forward, asking Jesus to make them the most prominent of the Apostles when He comes into His glory. Our Lord asks if they can do what He does and they assure Him that they can. *"When the ten heard this, they became indignant at James and John."*

Jesus replies to not only James and John, but each disciple, saying to them . . . *"Whoever wishes to be great among you will be your servant; whoever wishes to be first among you will be the slave of all. For the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many"* Mark 10:41, 43-45.

Neither James and John, the *"Sons of Thunder"* nor the others comprehend the essence of suffering and sacrifice that encompass Christ's mission of redemption. When Jesus explained what it meant to be a disciple and, especially, a leader of those who follow His way, He must have disturbed them all. Once again, He indicated His coming death and turned the usual view of life upside down.

But Christians are expected to do far more than embrace worldly standards. To be great means loving service to all, particularly those in most need. To be great means standing up for faith in our Savior, no matter the cost. In time, the Apostles did learn.

A week from today, we celebrate World Mission Sunday. The theme for this year comes from the Acts of the Apostles 4:20: *"We cannot but speak about what we have seen and heard."* This was said by John and Peter after healing and preaching in the name of Jesus. They had been threatened and warned by the same Sanhedrin that arranged the arrest and crucifixion of Christ at the hands of the Romans. John would spend the rest of his life sharing the Good News with others. Peter would lead the Church in its difficult early days, until he died for his faith. And James? He was beheaded; the very first of the Apostles to be martyred. They did all our Lord asked. It took them time to grasp what it can mean to be a Christian. Now it is up to us to understand and accept everything our life of faith entails.

To be on Mission is to be willing to think as Christ does, to believe with Him that those around us are also my brothers and sisters. May His compassionate love touch our hearts and make us all true Missionary disciples, especially in this, the celebration of the 110th Anniversary of the *Pontifical Mission Societies*. With your prayers and support over these 110 years, you have answered the call and helped Missionaries and the people they serve around the world.

*"Lord, let your mercy be on us, as we place our trust in you."* Psalm 33: 22

*"Fill us with your love, O Lord, that all our days we may sing for joy!"* Psalm 90: 14



**PONTIFICAL MISSION SOCIETIES**

## Homily Helps:

### Reflections on the readings for the Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time

October 24, 2021: Jer 31: 7-9; PS 126: 1-2, 2-3, 4-5, 6; Heb 5: 1-6, Mt 10: 46-52

### Committed to take courage, get up and share the words and work of the Lord with everyone

On this World Mission Sunday, we recall with gratitude all those men and women who by their testimony of life help us to renew our baptismal commitment to be generous and joyful apostles of the Gospel. Let us remember especially all those who purposefully set out, leaving home and family behind, to bring the Gospel to all those places and people thirsty for its saving message. For those of us who remain at home, we can contribute to our Father's plan through prayer and the example we offer in our own community.

In today's readings, we see God's desire to console and guide His people, as we hear: *"I will gather them from the ends of the world, with the blind and the lame in their midst. They departed in tears, but I will console them and guide them."* Jr 31: 8 And then, God asking them, and each one of us, to take courage to grasp what Jesus is calling us to do and respond.

In the Gospel, we hear, *"Take courage; get up, Jesus is calling you."* What a beautiful expression, something that should be part of our vocabulary with everyone in the Church!

*"Take courage, get up, Jesus is calling you."* It would have been very easy for Jesus to come to meet Bartimaeus exactly where he was begging. But Jesus loved him too much and understands the human heart too well to do that. Instead he drew near, he got close, but then he had Bartimaeus get up to come to him, to exercise Bartimaeus' freedom, to give him greater participation in the miracle Jesus was about to accomplish. It takes courage to get up and leave our comfort zone to respond to the Lord. Bartimaeus had that courage and did.

Similarly, on many occasions, we need a similar courage to respond to the Lord. It might be getting up and going to the Church rather than remaining in the comfort of our homes. It might be helping out with some form of charity rather than remaining isolated. But when Jesus calls he always challenges us to move. He never says to us, *"Stay exactly where you are. Don't budge."* Rather He, who is always on the move, He who is always passing by waiting for an invitation, perpetually invites us to get up from where we are and follow Him. That's the fundamental moment of the call *to be Missionary*. The call to embrace His truth. He expects those who have faith to communicate it to others.

Just as the Bartimaeus and the Apostles saw, heard and touched the saving power of Jesus cf. 1 Jn 1:1-4, we too can daily touch the sorrowful and glorious flesh of Christ. There we can find the courage to share with everyone we meet a destiny of hope, the sure knowledge that the Lord is ever at our side. As Catholics, we cannot keep the Lord to ourselves: the Church's evangelizing Mission finds outward fulfilment in the transformation of our world. An invitation to each of us . . .

To be on Mission is to be willing to think as Christ does, to believe with Him that those around us are also my brothers and sisters. May His compassionate love touch our hearts and make us all true Missionary disciples, especially in this, the celebration of the 110th Anniversary of the *Pontifical Mission Societies*. With your prayers and support over these 110 years, you have answered the call and helped Missionaries and the people they serve around the world.

*"The Lord has done great things for us; we are filled with joy."* Psalm 126: 1,3



## PONTIFICAL MISSION SOCIETIES



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OFFICE of the ARCHBISHOP

October, 2021

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

This year World Mission Sunday will be observed on October 24<sup>th</sup>. This celebration will also mark the 110th Anniversary of the *Pontifical Mission Societies*. Thanks to the prayers and financial support of the faithful from our local Church, the *Societies* have helped provide for the needs of missionaries world-wide for more than a century.

Our Church's missionary history is a rich one. It is filled with monumental saintly examples we can strive to imitate such as Francis Xavier and Thérèse of Lisieux who serve as Patron & Patroness of the Missions, Damien of Moloka, Kateri Tekakwitha and Daniele Comboni, to name just a few of the many Catholic missionaries who became saints.

Locally, the Archdiocese of Philadelphia has long ties to the important work of the Pontifical Mission Societies. We were one of the first places in the United States to designate a local office specifically tasked with supporting missionaries half-a-world away. In 1956, we held one of the largest exhibits of Catholic Missions ever with 500,000 people gathered here to meet 170 missionary groups with Archbishop Fulton Sheen as the keynote speaker.

The international theme for World Mission Sunday this year is, *"Proclaim It with Joy . . . We cannot but speak about what we have seen and heard."* It comes from Acts 4:20 and is a wonderful reflection of the missionary spirit flowing through our Archdiocese. It also summons each of us to bring to others what we bear in our hearts. This Mission has always been the hallmark of the Church, for *"She exists to evangelize."*

I invite everyone to pray for missionaries around the world this weekend and to provide help as your means allow. Your gifts will support priests, consecrated religious, and lay pastoral leaders in 1,111 Mission Dioceses around the globe as they proclaim the Gospel, build up the Church, and serve the poor.

Thank you for your continuous commitment to Mission throughout our Archdiocese over the years and for your generous response on this special day. As Pope Francis tells us, *"To be on Mission is to be willing to think as Christ does, to believe with him that those around us are also my brothers and sisters."* May Christ's compassionate love touch our hearts and make us all true Missionary disciples.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nelson J. Pérez".

Most Reverend Nelson J. Pérez, D.D.  
Archbishop of Philadelphia

*Please communicate the contents of this letter, via at the pulpit, bulletin and through all your means of communication, to your parishioners on October 16-17; the collection to be taken October 23-24. For more about this important celebration of the universal Church, please visit our local website at [www.phillymissions.org](http://www.phillymissions.org).*