



## MISSION HOMILY HELPS

### 27th Sunday in Ordinary Time • October 5 & 6

**First Reading: Gen 2:18-24 ; Second Reading: Heb 2: 9-11; Gospel: Mark 10:2-16 or 10:2-12**

We have just heard words which speak to us of the enduring bond arising between a man and a woman in marriage. Catholics appreciate this bond in a special way because we recognize it as the sign of a relationship uniquely open to the support and assistance of God's grace. Those here today who have experienced marriage themselves -- or who are considering entering into the vocation of marriage at some point in the future -- will know the joy which this kind of personal commitment can bring.

Even for people who are not [*or who may never be*] bound to another person in marriage, the readings for today's Mass still teach us about our relationships. Because, at heart, Jesus calls all of us into relationships requiring faithfulness, not just in marriage. And more: using the language of the Gospel, faithfulness is not just a call, it is a command. Jesus commands us to be faithful.

But faithful to what? Maybe the better way of asking this question is as "faithful to whom?"

In Mark's Gospel Jesus refers back to the same chapters of Genesis from which we heard a few lines read earlier. In those chapters from the book of Genesis we witness many important "firsts." These include the first moments of time at the beginning of the universe; the creation of the very first forms of life to exist on earth; the first experiences of humankind in the story of Adam and Eve, man and woman. At the beginning of Genesis, we appreciate how God creates everything -- the earth and sky, life, human beings— in order, it seems, to be able to be in relationship with something other than himself. So, if Jesus is commanding us to be faithful, in an important sense he is saying first we need to be faithful to God, to the Creator. In a deeply mysterious way, we are created to be in relationship with God.

But more, human beings were created as male and female. God placed in the Garden of Eden to work together to continue the goodness of the world and work in harmony. They were also created to be in relationship with other people. So, while we are called to be faithful to God we are also commanded to be faithful to each other.

In marriage, this kind of fidelity, will look a certain way and bear fruit in certain kinds of actions. Fundamentally, our Catholic understanding of this bond, marriage, is not just about the commitment of two people alone. Marriage expands and extends relationships. In most cases, a couple will have children and so will invite new life into the world. Marriage and family are also about hospitable invitations to other people, especially the poor and those who might not have the support of such loving relationships already in their lives. Marriage casts a wide net of relationships into which we are all enmeshed in some way.

This is well known in the work of the Missions. In a profound way, Missionaries may have given up the limited bonds of marriage and family in order to be hospitable and inviting to the human and spiritual needs of other people— in particular those who experience most acute human and spiritual needs in the developing world. But still, whether for the married couple or for the Missionary, fidelity, lived well is a sign of grace—a demonstration of God's loving, hospitable involvement in the world that He has created.

As we move from reflecting on the words of Scripture to receiving the grace of the Eucharist into our bodies and souls, let us give thanks to God for who and what He has given to us, the very people and relationships to which we have been called to be faithful.



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## MISSION HOMILY HELPS

### 28th Sunday in Ordinary Time • October 12 & 13

**First Reading: Wis 7: 7-11 ; Second Reading: Heb 4: 12-13; Gospel: Mark 10:17-30 or 10:17-27**

People who read Scripture very carefully appreciate the small, human details of Mark's Gospel. Consider, for example, some words in the passage just proclaimed where the rich young man does not just approach Jesus. He "runs up" and "kneels down" in front of him. The man is not just disappointed. His "face falls." In the midst of the dialogue, Jesus does not simply glance at the man, rather, He "looks at him, loving him." These details lend a special flavor to the action.

Many of us may feel comfort when we can figure out the big things and appreciate the big picture. But the literary details found in Mark's Gospel remind us that little things are important, too. Maybe the big picture is what, overall, we want to view in life but the little details have to be part of that appreciation. Sometimes it is good to limit the frame of our vision and concentrate on small things which link together to draw out the large view. Life often is truly more manageable when we concentrate on the small and not let the big overwhelm us. There is truth and beauty to be discovered in limitation.

The relationship between the large and the small feels important in the readings today. In the first reading from the book of Wisdom, the author recognizes the virtue of prudence as a powerful gift and force for good. These days when we use the word "prudence" we might mean something like 'careful' or 'cautious,' like when to say, "She made a prudent financial decision by paying off her credit card debt instead of going on an expensive vacation," we might say. But the deeper, longer traditional understanding of that word refers not so much "to caution" but, rather, "to strategy." Prudence is the virtue by which a person has skill to figure out how to reach an important goal. Prudence is what helps us put all the little pieces together into the big picture of an action.

In the work of the Missions, prudence is crucial. The Missionary has a big, overall purpose: to proclaim the Kingdom of God. But how can that happen? What are the best, right little steps that lead to that solemnly important goal? If, like the author of the book of Wisdom, the Missionary prays and receives prudence as a gift then he can have faith that the way will be made clear over time, step-by-step. Still, we might get caught up too much in the little things and forget about the big picture. Prudence, if nurtured, allows us to have patience but still to see progress. Notice how the rich young man gets mixed up here. He's a good person and Jesus loves him but he wants to hurry, hurry, hurry. He has difficulty figuring out how to give away, or at least manage, his many possessions, with the ultimate goal of enjoying eternal life. It must feel like a puzzle to him, yet not an unsolvable one if he would take the time to go step-by-step.



Prudence is hospitable -- it invites our hearts and minds to consider many possibilities but doesn't let us shirk the responsibility of narrowing down to what is good and possible. Still, we have to be humble enough to settle into the details -- to spend time doing things that are worthy of action. There is no shame in little steps and small things.

As we continue with this Mass, Christ encourages us to have our sights set on a distant goal while He also strengthens us in this Eucharist to be patient in pursuing the small steps needed to get there. Let us pray to become people willing to take the risk of following Christ right now in order to enjoy eternal life with Him in time to come.

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## MISSION HOMILY HELPS FOR WORLD MISSION SUNDAY

### 29th Sunday in Ordinary Time • October 19 & 20

**First Reading: Is 53: 10-11; Second Reading: Heb 4: 4-16; Gospel: Matthew 10:35-45 or 10: 42-45**

Some people like to be in charge. Whether it is the person first to accept a new project at work or school, or the enthusiastic teammate who readily volunteers to organize an event, or the generous individual who always offers to assist, there are people all around who raise their hand and jump in when help is needed.

But being in charge presents certain temptations. Sometimes, in order to really get things done the leader has to be firm in setting expectations and correcting coworkers if everyone is not pulling their weight. This might lead the boss to act with impatience or rudeness. At other times, the leader might fall into the trap of thinking that good was accomplished only because of them, and not the joint effort of the whole team working together as one unit.

We are reminded in the Gospel reading at today's Mass that Jesus is okay with someone stepping up and being in charge—but Jesus is also very concerned that this person, the generous leader-volunteer, be aware of their attitude about responsibility. Quite simply, to the Christian, authority and leadership is not about being served by others or being the boss. It is about being of service *“TO”* others.

This weekend the Church universally celebrates World Mission Sunday, a yearly commemoration which highlights the important role Missionary organizations and Mission-oriented individuals have in sharing the Good News of God's Kingdom and working in co-operation with God to make the Kingdom more visible right now. This year the Holy Father encourages us to consider how the work of the Missions is at heart, one of invitation and hospitality. Meaning, the Missionary is effective when Mission work lovingly and generously offers to share God's gifts with persons and communities who might not be aware of what those gifts are.

The work of Mission is not about force, control or status. It is fundamentality about open hospitality, an offering of an invitation into better, fuller life within the earthly setting we find now—and, ultimately into the fullness of God's life in the Kingdom.

On World Mission Sunday we pay special attention to the organizations and individuals who do this work in places of dire need. But, in truth, each one of us is called to be a Missionary. Each of us is asked by Christ to share with others our love and commitment to discipleship within the specific circumstances of our own lives. The deeper our commitment to discipleship the more passionate our desire to share it with others can be. But in all this, we should take to heart the truth of the scriptures today. It is good to step up and take responsibility, but not in ways which *“lord it over”* others. Responsibility and authority in Christ are not about issuing commands or bullying. True Christian leadership is service of one another in response to the real earthly and spiritual needs of the world.

This weekend, as World Mission Sunday is celebrated in every parish world wide, let us unite in prayer for the success of the Church's Missionary activity and for the Missionaries who dedicate their lives to spreading the Gospel. Your generosity serves as a powerful witness to the love and compassion at the heart of our faith, ensuring that everyone receives the invitation to the Lord's banquet.

Together, may we deepen our commitment to the Church's universal Mission and rejoice in the opportunity to share God's love with the world and invite all to the banquet of the Lord. Together with a Missionary spirit, we can bring everyone to recognize Jesus in the Word and the Eucharist. Your prayers are invaluable, and your financial support provides for the essential services to our brothers and sisters in need around the world.

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