

“You shall be my witnesses to the ends of the earth”

Hospitaller Missionary Week 2022

17 to 23 October



**You shall be my witnesses in
Hospitality**

TO THE SISTERS HOSPITALLERS AND THE BROTHERS OF ST JOHN OF GOD

As is our custom each year, we are sending you some basic materials for celebrating Hospitaller Missionary Week under the theme "You shall be my witnesses to the ends of the earth", which you can proclaim on Sunday 16th with the introduction of Pope Francis' Message on World Mission Day.

Drawing on the message of Pope Francis and other authors referring to evangelisation, throughout the week we touch on such matters as synodality, war and migration. We are offering these readings to reflect on each day from different points of view.

Confronting our own local situations, to remain faithful to our mission demands creativity and discernment, the courage to allow ourselves to be challenged by those who suffer, and the poor, or those who have lost their jobs or their loved ones, and to continue to remain by their side with our acts of Hospitality.

It is our hope that reflecting and praying on these readings will help to strengthen our sending out to the mission and make it bear fruit as a result of our service of hospitality wherever we may be.

We send you all our very best wishes, trusting that all together we shall continue to be messengers of the Gospel in our Church as she goes forth.

Sister Maria Begoña

Brother Ángel López

Introduction

My mission of being in the heart of the people is not just a part of my life or a badge I can take off; it is not an “extra” or just another moment in life. Instead, it is something I cannot uproot from my being without destroying my very self. I am a mission on this earth; that is the reason why I am here in this world. We have to regard ourselves as sealed, even branded, by this mission of bringing light, blessing, enlivening, raising up, healing and freeing. All around us we begin to see nurses with soul, teachers with soul, politicians with soul, people who have chosen deep down to be with others and for others. But once we separate our work from our private lives, everything turns grey and we will always be seeking recognition or asserting our needs. We stop being a people.

FRANCIS, Apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, 273

Reading for Sunday, 16 October, proclaiming Missionary Week

World Mission Day 2022.

The Pope: Let us show the courage of the first Christians

The Church is missionary by nature. To evangelize is the very identity of the Church. Before His Ascension into heaven Jesus gave His disciples the mandate which is the essential call for all Christians: "You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth". In his message for World Mission Day Pope Francis offers some reflections on the key phrases that describe the life and mission of the disciples.

You shall be my witnesses

You shall be my witnesses: these words, writes the Pope, are "the central point": Jesus says that all disciples are to be His witnesses and that "thanks to the grace of the Holy Spirit that they will receive" and "the Church, the community of Christ's disciples, has no other mission than that of bringing the Gospel to the entire world by bearing witness to Christ." He goes on to explain:

Each baptized Christian is called to mission, in the Church and by the mandate of the Church: consequently, mission is carried out together, not individually, in communion with the ecclesial community, and not on one's own initiative. Even in cases where an individual in some very particular situation carries out the evangelizing mission alone, he must always do so in communion with the Church which commissioned him.

It is Christ to whom we must bear witness

Pope Francis quotes the words of St Paul VI in *Evangelii nuntiandi*: "Evangelization is for no one an individual and isolated act; it is one that is deeply ecclesial", adding that the disciples "are sent by Jesus to the world not only to *carry out*, but also and above all *to live* the mission entrusted to them; not only to *bear* witness, but also and above all to *be* witnesses of Christ."

Missionaries of Christ are not sent to communicate themselves, to exhibit their persuasive qualities and abilities or their managerial skills. Instead, theirs is the supreme honour of presenting Christ in words and deeds, proclaiming to everyone the Good News of his salvation, as the first apostles did, with joy and boldness.

To the ends of the earth

The mission entrusted to the disciples is universal in character, extending from Jerusalem to 'the ends of the earth'. And Francis makes this clarification: "the disciples are sent not to proselytize, but to proclaim; the Christian does not proselytize." They are the image of the Church "going forth". Persecuted in Jerusalem, the first Christians bore witness to Jesus everywhere" and the Pope goes on to say:

Something similar still happens in our own day. Due to religious persecution and situations of war and violence, many Christians are forced to flee from their homelands to other countries. We are grateful to these brothers and sisters who do not remain locked in their own suffering but bear witness to Christ and to the love of God in the countries that accept them.

After saying that the words "to the ends of the earth" should challenge the disciples of Jesus in every age, he adds: *Christ's Church will continue to "go forth" towards new geographical, social and existential horizons, towards "borderline" places and human situations, in order to bear witness to Christ and his love to men and women of every people, culture and social status. In this sense, the mission will always be a missio ad gentes, as the Second Vatican Council taught. The Church must constantly keep pressing forward, beyond her own confines, in order to testify to all the love of Christ. Here I would like to remember and express my gratitude for all those many missionaries who gave their lives in order to "press on" in incarnating Christ's love towards all the brothers and sisters whom they met.*

You will receive power from the Holy Spirit

Faced with such a great responsibility, Jesus also promises His own the grace to succeed: the Holy Spirit will give them strength and wisdom. Without the Spirit, no Christian would be able to bear full witness to Christ:

"All Christ's missionary disciples are therefore called to recognize the essential importance of the Spirit's work, to dwell in his presence daily and to receive his unflinching strength and guidance. Indeed, it is precisely when we feel tired, unmotivated or confused that we should remember to have recourse to the Holy Spirit in prayer. Let me emphasize once again that prayer plays a fundamental role in the missionary life, for it allows us to be refreshed and strengthened by the

Spirit as the inexhaustible divine source of renewed energy and joy in sharing Christ's life with others."

A completely missionary Church

Invoking Mary, Queen of the Missions, Francis continues:

Dear brothers and sisters, I continue to dream of a completely missionary Church, and a new era of missionary activity among Christian communities. I repeat Moses' great desire for the people of God on their journey: "Would that all the Lord's people were prophets!" (Num 11:29). Indeed, would that all of us in the Church were what we already are by virtue of baptism: prophets, witnesses, missionaries of the Lord, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to the ends of the earth!

Monday 17 October

Praedicate Evangelium (cf. Mk 16,15; Mt 10,7-8)

This is the task which Our Lord Jesus entrusted to his disciples. This mandate represents "the first service which the Church can render to every person and to the whole of humanity in today's world". This is what she was called to do, to proclaim the Gospel of the Son of God, Christ our Lord, and in so doing, to make all peoples listen to the faith (cf. Rom 1:1-5; Gal 3:5). The Church fulfils her mandate above all when she bears witness, in word and work, to the mercy which she herself has freely received. Our Lord and Master left us an example of this when he washed the feet of his disciples and said that we will be blessed if we too do the same (cf. Jn 13:14-17). In this way "the evangelising community enters into the daily life of others through works and gestures, shrinks distances, stoops down to the point of humiliation if necessary, and takes on human life, touching the suffering flesh of Christ in the people". In doing this, the people of God fulfil the command of Our Lord which, in asking us to proclaim the Gospel, urges us to care for the weakest brothers and sisters, the sick and the suffering.

The missionary conversion of the Church

The "missionary conversion" of the Church is intended to renew the Church in the image of Christ's own mission of love. His disciples are therefore called to be the "light of the world" (Mt 5:14). This is how the Church reflects the saving love of Christ, which is the Light of the world (cf. Jn 8:12). She herself becomes more radiant when she brings to people the supernatural gift of faith, the light "which directs our path in time" and places herself at the service of the Gospel so that this light "may grow and illuminate the present, and become a star which shows the horizon of our journey in a time in which man has a special need for light".

Everything Christian is a missionary disciple

The Pope, the bishops and other ordained ministers are not the only evangelisers in the Church. They know that "they have not instituted by Christ to assume alone everything in the Church's salvific mission in the world". Every Christian, by virtue

of Baptism, is a disciple-missionary "insofar as he or she has encountered the love of God in Christ Jesus". This cannot be ignored in the updating of the Curia, whose reform, therefore, must provide for the participation of the laity, even in functions of government and responsibility. Their presence and participation is also essential, for they cooperate for the good of the whole Church and, by their family life, by their knowledge of social realities and by their faith, which leads them to discover God's ways in the world, they can make valid contributions, especially when it comes to promoting the family and respect for the values of life and creation, of the Gospel as leaven of temporal realities and of discernment of the signs of the times.

Tuesday 18 October

The Good News for today

We rejoice that the living God did not abandon us to our lostness and despair. In his love he came after us in Jesus Christ to rescue and remake us. So the good news focuses on the historic person of Jesus, who came proclaiming the kingdom of God and living a life of humble service, who died for us, becoming sin and a curse in our place, and whom God vindicated by raising him from the dead. To those who repent and believe in Christ, God grants a share in the new creation. He gives us new life, which includes the forgiveness of our sins and the indwelling, transforming power of his Spirit. He welcomes us into his new community, which consists of people of all races, nations, and cultures. And he promises that one day we will enter his new world, in which evil will be abolished, nature will be redeemed, and God will reign for ever. This good news must be boldly proclaimed, wherever possible, in church and in public halls, on radio and television, and in the open air, because it is God's power for salvation and we are under obligation to make it known. In our preaching we must faithfully declare the truth which God has revealed in the Bible and struggle to relate it to our own context. We also affirm that apologetics, namely "the defence and confirmation of the gospel" (Phil 1,7), is integral to the biblical understanding of mission and essential for effective witness in the modern world. Paul "reasoned" with people out of the Scriptures, with a view to "persuading" them of the truth of the gospel. So must we. In fact, all Christians should be ready to give a reason for the hope that is in them (I Pt 3;15). We have again been confronted with Luke's emphasis (Lk 4,18; 6,20; 7,22) that the gospel is good news for the poor and have asked ourselves what this means to the majority of the world's population who are destitute, suffering, or oppressed. We have been reminded that the law, the prophets and the wisdom books, and the teaching and ministry of Jesus, all stress God's concern for the materially poor and our consequent duty to defend and care for them. Scripture also refers to the spiritually poor who look to God alone for mercy. The gospel comes as good news to both. The spiritually poor, who, whatever their economic circumstances, humble themselves before God, receive by faith the free gift of salvation. There is no other way for anybody to enter the kingdom of God.

The materially poor and powerless find in addition a new dignity as God's children, and the love of brothers and sisters who will struggle with them for their liberation from everything which demeans or oppresses them. We repent of any neglect of God's truth in Scripture and determine both to proclaim and to defend it. We also repent where we have been indifferent to the plight of the poor, and where we have shown preference for the rich, and we determine to follow Jesus in preaching good news to all people by both word and deed.

The Manila Manifesto. Call on the whole Church to take the Gospel to the whole world.

Wednesday 19 October

My peace I leave with you, my peace I give you.

WAR THE GREATEST SIN AND EVANGELISATION THE GREATEST ANTIDOTE

Today, there is no point in quoting phrases from antiquity or the Middle Ages to justify war at certain times. Today, technological circumstances – which have profoundly changed human life – make any war the worst possible sin of all. A sin grows in gravity as the possibility of avoiding it or putting an end to it improves.

If war is a sin of such magnitude, educating people to acquire habits of peace has to be the most forceful sign of evangelisation. An evangelisation which becomes a culture and marks a way of detecting and confronting injustices through non-violent mechanisms. In a world which is geometrically moving away from the church, the miracle for the world to believe is still the Resurrection and Life. There is something which is not working with current evangelisation and as the Gospel tells us, "by their fruits we shall know them" (Lk 6, 43)

The world is not neutral, its prince (Jn 14:30) prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour (1 Pt 5:8). The horsemen of the Apocalypse (famine, war, pestilence and death) do their work in a world abandoned to their power. The greatest antidote is evangelisation in keeping with the times in harmony with Vatican II's updated Social Doctrine of the Church.

We are squandering the salvific potential of Christianity which is manifested in the first thing which the risen Jesus said to his apostles: "Peace be with you...as the Father has sent me, so I send you...". God became man, died and rose again to give us PEACE and to enable us to continue shaping it as his Kingdom, a Civilisation of Love with the flame of his Spirit, which will reach its fulfilment at the Parousia. The first right of human dignity is to be able to stay alive, not to be killed... in whatever name it may be. We worship the God of Life, who gives life. Jesus is the bread of life, the living water, which has the words of eternal life, etc.

Two thousand years of understanding the Gospel has gradually taught us that no war can ever be justified. Just as we now know how to interpret the macabre

warlike exploits in the Old Testament, so faith is opening our eyes to review the warlike and colonialist errors of Christian history. Appealing for forgiveness and adjusting our evangelising methods which we examine in depth, because humility gives us the freedom to proclaim the treasure we hold in clay vessels.

Guillermo Jesús Kowalski

Thursday 20 October

New models of missionary action

The action of the Spirit of God in the world has brought great multitudes of believers into the kingdom. New churches have arisen from which thousands of missionaries have reached the Third World. Now that same Spirit is challenging us to reconsider not only our missionary structures, but also the forms of engagement. What impact does the latter have on the cultures it addresses? This is a big question, especially for the more recently formed churches. Some missions operating in the Western world have opted for the internationalisation of their structures and for recruiting missionaries of different nationalities. This is a positive fact. Another reason for rejoicing is the continuous increase of missions active in the Third World. Ways are being explored to establish mutual aid relationships between these two types of missionary societies, engaged in different sectors with the same mandate in mind. Some forms of collaboration are already in place with mutual benefits. It is to be hoped that more news about this will be disseminated and that experiments of this kind will be broadened (in the field of missionary training, as well as in the deployment of employees, the sharing of resources, and the communication of experiences and information). Youth missions must be left free to learn from their mistakes. Many of the problems they face, however, have already been dealt with by older missions, whose experience they need to be aware of in order to be able to make use of it.

Wheaton Congress Declaration

Friday 21 October

The synodal journey of the pilgrim and missionary People of God

Synodality manifests the 'pilgrim' character of the Church. The image of the People of God, gathered from among the nations (*Acts 2,1-9; 15,14*), expresses its social, historical and missionary character, which corresponds to the condition and vocation of each human person as *homo viator*. The path is the image that clarifies our understanding of the mystery of Christ as the Way that leads to the Father[55]. Jesus is the way from God to man and from man to God[56]. The grace-filled event whereby He made Himself a pilgrim by pitching His tent among us (*John 1,14*), goes on in the synodal path of the Church..

The Church journeys with Christ, through Christ and in Christ. He, the wayfarer, the Way and our homeland, gives His Spirit of love (*Romans* 5,5) so that, in Him, we may follow "the most perfect way" (*1 Corinthians* 12,31). The Church is called to retrace the footsteps of her Lord until He returns (*1 Corinthians* 11,26). She is the People of the Way (*Acts* 9,2; 18,25; 19,9) towards the Kingdom of heaven (*Philippians* 3,20). Synodality is the historical form of her journeying in communion towards final rest (*Hebrews* 3,7-4,44). Faith, hope and love guide and inform the pilgrimage of the assembly of the Lord "in sight of the future city" (*Hebrews* 11,10). Christians are "pilgrims and strangers" in the world (*1 Peter* 2,11), honoured with the gift and responsibility of proclaiming to all the Gospel of the Kingdom.

The People of God is journeying towards the end of time (*Matthew* 28,20) and towards the ends of the earth (*Acts* 1,8). The Church lives through space in the various local Churches and travels through the time of Christ's Passover until His *parousia*. She is a single historical subject; already present and working in her are the eschatological destiny of definitive union with God and the unity of the human family in Christ[57]. The synodal form of her journey expresses and promotes the exercise of communion in each of the local Churches and between them in the one Church of Christ.

The synodal dimension of the Church implies communion in the living faith of the various local Churches with each other and with the Church of Rome, both in a diachronic sense - *antiquitas* - and in a synchronic sense - *universitas*. The handing on and reception of the Symbols of faith and of the decisions of local, provincial and - in a specific and universal sense - ecumenical Synods, have expressed and guaranteed in a normative way that communion in faith professed by the Church everywhere, always and by everyone (*quod ubique, quod semper, quod ab omnibus creditum est*).

Synodality is lived out in the Church in the service of mission. *Ecclesia peregrinans natura sua missionaria est*[59]; she exists in order to evangelise[60]. The whole People of God is an agent of the proclamation of the Gospel[61]. Every baptised person is called to be a protagonist of mission since we are all missionary disciples. The Church is called, in synodal synergy, to activate the ministries and charisms present in her life and to listen to the voice of the Spirit, in order to discern the ways of evangelisation..

Synodality in the life and mission of the Church. [International Theological Commission](#)

Saturday 22 October

Embrace the word of God and seek justice

In the Church no one is a stranger, and the Church is not foreign to anyone, anywhere. As a sacrament of unity and thus a sign and a binding force for the whole human race, the Church is the place where illegal immigrants are also recognized and accepted as brothers and sisters. It is the task of the various Dioceses actively to ensure that these people, who are obliged to live outside the safety net of civil society, may find a sense of brotherhood in the Christian community. Solidarity means taking responsibility for those in trouble. For Christians, the migrant is not merely an individual to be respected in accordance with the norms established by law, but a person whose presence challenges them and whose needs become an obligation for their responsibility. "What

have you done to your brother?" (cf. Gen 4:9). The answer should not be limited to what is imposed by law, but should be made in the manner of solidarity.

The Church considers the problem of illegal migrants from the standpoint of Christ, who died to gather together the dispersed children of God (cf. Jn 11:52), to rehabilitate the marginalized and to bring close those who are distant, in order to integrate all within a communion that is not based on ethnic, cultural or social membership, but on the common desire to accept God's word and to seek justice. "God shows no partiality, but in every nation any one who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him" (Acts 10:34-35). The Church acts in continuity with Christ's mission. "I was a stranger and you welcomed me" (Mt 25:35). It is the Church's task not only to present constantly the Lord's teaching of faith but also to indicate its appropriate application to the various situations which the changing times continue to create. Today the illegal migrant comes before us like that "stranger" in whom Jesus asks to be recognized. To welcome him and to show him solidarity is a duty of hospitality and fidelity to Christian identity itself.

John Paul II, Message for World Migration Day, 1996

Sunday 23 October

INTERCULTURAL PASTORAL CARE OF MIGRANTS

Catholic communities, increasingly freed from all kinds of fear, especially fears based on misperceptions, are being called to build bridges with newcomers, promoting an authentic culture of encounter. We sincerely trust that these Guidelines will help us to truly become bridge-builders, attempting to deepen our awareness, through our experience, of the enrichment that the presence of migrants and refugees brings to our communities.

Considering every occasion of encounter with migrants and refugees in need as an opportunity to encounter Jesus Christ himself (cf. Mt 25:35), Catholic communities are being called upon to understand and appreciate the opportunities that migrants offer to bring new life to their communities, and to grow in appreciation of the other.

Catholic communities are also invited to see the presence of many non-Christian or non-believing migrants and refugees to be a providential opportunity to fulfil the Church's evangelising mission through witness and charity.

It is thanks to the awareness of the presence of migrants and refugees which, by God's grace, is growing in Catholic communities, that the Church will continue to highlight the wide variety of its members as a precious resource to be appreciated, and the contributions of the displaced as an opportunity to express the catholic nature of our faith, more forcefully and visibly.

In our encounter with the diversity of foreigners, migrants, refugees and in the intercultural dialogue this can give rise to, we are given the opportunity to grow as a Church, to enrich one another. Every baptised Christian, wherever they may

be, is therefore a full member of the local ecclesial community, a member of the one Church, a resident in the one home, a member of the one family.

Indeed, the purpose of these Pastoral Guidelines is that we start from the bottom and expand to the remotest borders of our countries to welcome, protect, promote and integrate our migrant and refugee brothers and sisters, building up the Kingdom of God in brotherhood and universality, and join Zechariah as he sings: "And the oath that he swore to our ancestor Abraham, to grant that we, being rescued from the hands of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all our days." (Lk 1:73-75).