

# HOSPITALLER MISSION WEEK

18 -24 October 2021



We cannot but speak about what we have seen and heard



Witnesses and prophets of Hospitality



## MESSAGE OF THE HOLY FATHER FRANCIS

### FOR WORLD MISSION SUNDAY 2021

Summary of Pope Francis's message

Dear Brothers and Sisters

Once we experience the power of God's love, and recognize his fatherly presence in our personal and community life, we cannot help but proclaim and share what we have seen and heard. Jesus' relationship with his disciples and his humanity, as revealed to us in the mystery of his Incarnation, Gospel and Paschal Mystery, shows us the extent to which God loves our humanity and makes his own our joys and sufferings, our hopes and our concerns (cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, 22). Everything about Christ reminds us that he knows well our world and its need for redemption, and calls us to become actively engaged in this mission: "Go therefore to the highways and byways, and invite everyone you find" (Mt 22:9). No one is excluded, no one need feel distant or removed from this compassionate love.

The history of evangelization began with the Lord's own passionate desire to call and enter into friendly dialogue with everyone, just as they are (cf. *Jn* 15:12-17). The Apostles are the first to tell us this. Friendship with our Lord, seeing him heal the sick, eat with sinners, feed the hungry, reach out to the excluded, touch the unclean, identify with the needy, invite them to be the blessed of the Father, teach in a new and authoritative way, leaves an indelible mark, capable of raising astonishment, and an expansive and gratuitous joy that cannot be contained.

Even so, things were not always easy. The first Christians began the life of faith amid hostility and hardship. Experiences of marginalization and imprisonment combined with internal and external struggles that seemed to contradict and even negate what they had seen and heard. Yet, rather than a difficulty or an obstacle leading them to step back or close in on themselves, those experiences impelled them to turn problems, conflicts and difficulties into opportunities for mission. Limitations and obstacles became a privileged occasion for anointing everything and everyone with the Spirit of the Lord. Nothing and no one was to be excluded from the message of liberation.

The same holds true for us: our own times are not easy. The pandemic has brought to the fore and amplified the pain, the solitude, the poverty and the injustices experienced by so many people. It has unmasked our false sense of security and revealed the brokenness and polarization quietly growing in our midst. Those who are most frail and vulnerable have come to feel even more so. We have experienced discouragement, disillusionment and fatigue, causing us to give way to a bitter sense of despair. For our part, however, "we do not proclaim ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus' sake" (2 *Cor* 4:5). As a result, in our communities and in our families, we can hear the powerful message of life that echoes in our hearts and proclaims: "He is not here, but has risen (*Lk* 24:6)!"

In these days of pandemic, when there is a temptation to disguise and justify indifference and apathy in the name of healthy social distancing, there is urgent need for *the mission of compassion*, which can make that necessary distancing an opportunity for encounter, care and promotion. "What we have seen and heard" (*Acts* 4:20), the mercy we have experienced, can thus become a point of reference and a source of credibility, enabling

us to recover a shared passion for building “a community of belonging and solidarity worthy of our time, our energy and our resources ([Fratelli Tutti](#), 36)..

Jesus Christ is truly alive” ([Evangelii Gaudium](#), 275) and wants us to be alive, fraternal, and capable of cherishing and sharing this message of hope. In our present circumstances, there is an urgent need for missionaries of hope who, anointed by the Lord, can provide a prophetic reminder that no one is saved by himself.

The theme of this year’s World Mission Day – “**We cannot but speak about what we have seen and heard**” ([Acts 4:20](#)), is a summons to each of us to “own” and 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” (SAINT PAUL VI, [Evangelii Nuntiandi](#), 14).

the call to mission is not a thing of the past, or a romantic leftover from earlier times. Today too Jesus needs hearts capable of experiencing vocation as a true love story that urges them to go forth to the peripheries of our world as messengers and agents of compassion. He addresses this call to everyone, and in different ways. We can think of the peripheries all around us, in the heart of our cities or our own families. Universal openness to love has a dimension that is not geographical but existential. Always, but especially in these times of pandemic, it is important to grow in our daily ability to widen our circle, to reach out to others who, albeit physically close to us, are not immediately part of our “circle of interests” (cf. [Fratelli Tutti](#), 97).

May Mary, the first missionary disciple, increase in all the baptized the desire to be salt and light in our lands (cf. [Mt 5:13-14](#)).

## **Monday, 18 October**

Evangelii gaudium

### **Reasons for a renewed missionary impulse**

Spirit-filled evangelizers are evangelizers who pray and work. Mystical notions without a solid social and missionary outreach are of no help to evangelization, nor are dissertations or social or pastoral practices which lack a spirituality which can change hearts. These unilateral and incomplete proposals only reach a few groups and prove incapable of radiating beyond them because they curtail the Gospel. What is needed is the ability to cultivate an interior space which can give a Christian meaning to commitment and activity. Without prolonged moments of adoration, of prayerful encounter with the word, of sincere conversation with the Lord, our work easily becomes meaningless; we lose energy as a result of weariness and difficulties, and our fervour dies out. The Church urgently needs the deep breath of prayer, and to my great joy groups devoted to prayer and intercession, the prayerful reading of God’s word and the perpetual adoration of the Eucharist are growing at every level of ecclesial life. Even so, “we must reject the temptation to offer a privatized and individualistic spirituality which ill accords with the demands of charity, to say nothing of the implications of the incarnation”. There is always the risk that some moments of prayer can become an excuse for not offering one’s life in mission; a privatized lifestyle can lead Christians to take refuge in some false forms of spirituality.

We do well to keep in mind the early Christians and our many brothers and sisters throughout history who were filled with joy, unflagging courage and zeal in proclaiming the Gospel. Some people nowadays console themselves by saying that things are not as easy as they used to be, yet we know that the Roman empire was not conducive to the Gospel message, the struggle for justice, or the defence of human dignity. Every period of history is marked by the presence of human weakness, self-absorption, complacency and selfishness, to say nothing of the concupiscence which preys upon us all. These things are ever present under one guise or another; they are due to our human limits rather than particular situations. Let us not say, then, that things are harder today; they are simply different. But let us learn also from the saints who have gone before us, who confronted the difficulties of their own day. So I propose that we pause to rediscover some of the reasons which can help us to imitate them today.

**Tuesday, 19 October**

### **Hospitality on a mission**

Taken from the circular letters of Sister Anabela Moreira, Superior General of the Sisters Hospitallers of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

Aware that the quality of fraternal life is a fundamental pillar of our hospitaller life and also a concrete way of evangelising, Anabela Carneiro, invites us not to let ourselves be “robbed of missionary enthusiasm! falling into a spiritual life that does not nourish the encounter with the other, the commitment to the world, and the evangelizing passion; falling into a style of prayer which engenders individualism, an identity crisis and a diminishing fervour; falling into a practical relativism in which faith and Gospel values have no impact on daily life and the decisions that one makes.

Let us rise again to this new life which leads us to welcome God’s mercy, in the experience of intimacy with Jesus, and to implement it in our words and gestures of hospitality.

Let us rise again to this new life which takes us beyond our limitations and challenges us to live out with passion the “beautiful vocation of charity” which we have been given (Cong. 29/2018).

From the source of living water for the world ... is the second part of our petition in the prayer. We beg that He pour upon the world hope and salvation, justice and peace, gifts that I dare to trade for consolation, hope and hospitality, taking into account the reality in which we live at the global and congregational level.

The Lord pours out these gifts from his heart abundantly on humankind, but he wants to use us, both on a personal and congregational level, as “instruments” of his intervention; the petition must become “flesh” in us, in our words, gestures, feelings, in our life. You, my sister, are called to be an instrument of consolation, hope and hospitality. Likewise, the Congregation, in the midst of its challenges and hopes, is called today to witness consolation, hope and hospitality.

In this regard, in addition to what I am simply sharing, I would like to invite each community to reflect on concrete and creative ways of living consolation, hope and

hospitality ad intra, that is, in our community settings and in the hospitaller works and ad extra, with the people with whom we interact.

In the face of the suffering that is afflicting humanity and that we, because of our Samaritan vocation, are experiencing very closely, it is urgent that we be women capable of consoling, of bearing witness to the mercy and tenderness of the Lord. However, as Pope Francis reminds us, "But if we first experience the joy of being consoled by him, of being loved by him, then we can bring that joy to others. This is important if our mission is to be fruitful: to feel God's consolation and to pass it on to others!"

As concrete expressions of consolation, I wish to particularly emphasize closeness and care, an expression that the other and their reality are more important than ourselves and that their suffering does not leave us indifferent; listening and welcoming, allowing them to feel at home and communicate, verbally or otherwise, their anxieties and hopes, their desires and disappointments, their sadness and joys; the gentle and silent presence, which does not use empty words but knows how to "be with", and be a healing balm when the pain becomes strong and sometimes unbearable.

We can perceive this call to be "builders of hospitality", weaving, in our relationships and in apostolic service, Samaritan gestures that configure us and shape our being witnesses to the compassionate and merciful Christ.

The Chapter Document presents various concrete ways of "being builders of hospitality", of "practising hospitality, but I would like to share three aspects that I consider to be important for the time in which we are living: humble and joyful service, both to our sisters in community and in the apostolic works that have been entrusted to us; readiness to mission, putting the interests of the mission and the kingdom before our goals and preferences; and gratuitousness in carrying each other's burdens (cf. Gal 6:2). Cong 44/2020."

**Wednesday, 20 October.**

### **On a mission of mercy and hospitality "today"**

We are living in a society on the move, a globalising and globalised society. We are living in multicultural societies which make us discover and experience pluralism. This demands tolerance of others, of aliens. This situation enables us to see that no compact, homogeneous groups exist, and that there are no more any clearly defined and clearly delimited realities anymore. We are surprised when we see how our own things become alien, and what was initially alien enters our own environment. Complex societies require greater sensitivity in order to deal with all the situations of exclusion created by the excessive demand for our own identity or which stem from any social order.

The perverse situations of our world are also well-known. We know that the number of poor and marginalised people is not declining, but growing, despite the new technologies and the processes of globalisation. The sacred view of the human being is giving way to idols before which modern societies bow and pay tribute. The education which society offers the new generations (through the mass media and the socio-economic environment) does not emphasise the value of hospitality, but places greater stress to individualism and a materialistic and hedonistic view of life.

Rapid population growth is throwing down new challenges: families are being uprooted, urbanisation is spreading, available and accessible resources are being unsustainably exploited to meet the huge needs of the population. In many places and in many individuals, it seems that humanity has lost the sense of the sacredness of life: fratricidal wars, violence against defenceless women, the exploitation of innocent children, heartless capitalism which is widening the gap between the rich and the poor. There is a huge imbalance between the 30% of the human beings who live in a world of material affluence and the 70% who are condemned to remain in thrall to poverty and the deprivation of the most basic elements in life.

The attitudes of welcome and thanks, service and solidarity (hospitality!) of our contemporaries reveal all their splendour in so many institutions and initiatives: voluntary services, NGOs, a wide range of different types of social institutions, peace armies, movements working for justice, for ecology, for human dignity, and for the rejection of all forms of xenophobia, etc. There are also many peoples in the world who still preserve their precious traditions of hospitality as one of the most highly prized values. But it is also true that even among these peoples the value of hospitality is beginning to wane, because of the even more fundamental value of security; insecurity caused by violence, war, crimes and terrorism is so threatening that the traditional values of hospitality are bearing the brunt.

The Order wishes to be able to keep pace with the times and to respond with new vigour to its specific vocation, by offering places in which organisation, professionalism, technology and humanisation can be coupled harmoniously with attitudes and deeds of welcome, service, solidarity and the healing of physical and moral suffering.

The Path of Hospitality in the Manner of St John of God.

**Thursday, 21 October ,**

### **Inculturation.**

Stephen Bevans, SVD Society of the Divine Word  
SVD Professor of Mission and Culture at the Catholic Theology Union, Chicago

Throughout the history of the Church there have been many prophetic Christians who have practised in one form or another what we today call "inculturation." Peter and Paul, Justin Martyr, Francis of Assisi, Clare, Ramon Lull, Matteo Ricci, Martin Luther King, Mother Teresa, Roland Allen and Charles de Foucauld are but a few names in a long litany.

Missiologists, particularly those specialising in Church history, have recently highlighted the important contribution these figures have made to the history of the Church and to the development of theology. But while it can be said that in one form or another the church has always practised inculturation, what we mean by inculturation today is not something limited to a few men and women living "on the sidelines", in dangerous situations, but is an integral part of the authentic communication of the Gospel. "You can, and you must, have an African Christianity", Paul VI proclaimed in 1969. "Contextualisation . . . is not just a nice thing to do," writes the Evangelical missiologist, David Hesselgrave. "It is a necessity.

The fact that inculturation occupies a central place in missiology today is because theology and spirituality started to recognise the fundamental role of experience in human life. Traditionally, theology was seen as reflecting in faith on Scripture and Tradition. There was only one theology, valid always and everywhere. When theology began to recognise the anthropological shift that has so marked modern Western consciousness, experience took on an increasingly influential role in it. But it is not that experience was simply added to the traditional sources. The anthropological turn revealed that Scripture and Tradition were influenced by the experiences of women and men living in particular temporal, geographical and cultural contexts. And so experience has acquired a normative value that it did not have in the past.

We now recognise that Western theology was a limited, contextual product of a particular set of experiences. Every age and every culture has its own validity, and needs to reflect its faith in its own terms: it needs to use its own lenses to interpret Scripture, the doctrinal formulations of the past, ethical practices, and liturgical customs. The whole experience of the past (Scripture and Tradition) may interact with the experience of the present (context) in various ways conditioned by particular circumstances and theological convictions, but the fact that the Christian faith has to engage authentically with the context is simply a missiological imperative.

**Friday, 22 October.**

### **New forms of solidarity**

The principal message of hope I wish to share with you is precisely this: it's about solvable problems and not the absence of resources.

A rich world and a vibrant economy can and must put an end to poverty. Dynamics can be generated and stimulated, capable of including, feeding, curing and clothing the least of society instead of excluding them. We must choose what and whom to prioritize: if we propitiate humanizing socio-economic mechanisms for the whole of society or, on the contrary, we foment a system that ends by justifying certain practices, which only succeed in increasing the level of injustice and social violence. The level of wealth and technology accumulated by humanity, as well as the importance and value that human rights have acquired, no longer allows for excuses. We must be conscious that we are all responsible.

A new ethic implies being aware of the need for all to commit themselves to work together to close the tax havens, avoid evasions and money laundering that rob society, as well as to tell nations the importance of defending justice and the common good above the interests of companies and the most powerful multinationals (which end up by asphyxiating and impeding local production). The present time exacts and calls for taking a step that passes from the insular and antagonistic logic, as the only mechanism authorized for the solution of conflicts, to another capable of promoting the interconnection that propitiates a culture of encounter where the solid basis of a new international financial architecture is renewed.

In this context, where the development of some social and financial sectors has reached levels never seen before, how important it is to recall Saint Luke's words: "Every one to whom much is given, of him will much be required" (Luke 12:48ff.). How inspiring it is to

listen to Saint Ambrose, who thinks with the Gospel: "You [rich man] don't give of what is yours to the poor [when you do charity] but you are giving him what is his. As, the common property given in use for all, you alone are using" (Naboth 12:53). This is the principle of the universal destiny of goods, the basis of economic and social justice as also of the common good.

We celebrate the opportunity to know ourselves co-participants in the Lord's work, which can change the course of history in benefit of the dignity of each person of today and of tomorrow, especially of the excluded and in benefit of the great good of peace. With humility and wisdom, we make an effort together to serve international and inter-generational justice. We have boundless hope in Jesus' teaching that the poor in spirit are blessed and happy, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven (Cf. Matthew 5:3) which begins already here and now.

SPEECH BY HOLY FATHER FRANCISCO TO THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE SEMINAR "NEW FORMS OF SOLIDARITY" ORGANIZED BY THE PONTIFICAL ACADEMY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES February 5, 2020

**Saturday, 23 October.**

**A time of challenge.**

During the months of the virus crisis, we have all heard people saying, at least once, "nothing will ever be the same again", even though, deep down in our hearts, we all imagined and hoped that everything would eventually go back to the way things were before, or rather, that we would be able to make up for lost time and resources, in order to get back up to speed, at least to reoccupy our previous positions.

This should make us at least ask ourselves a few questions: what are we learning from this period, and at the same time, what changes are taking place and how can we imagine the future of our communities? What testimony can we offer as an indicator of prophecy?

Prophecy and testimony require us to be involved in responsible pastoral action, in an attempt to welcome, discern and commit ourselves to the "new" things that this time is bringing with it, given that no time is extraneous to the work of the Spirit. Unless we understand this time as an unfortunate episode to be held in abeyance and not considered to have been a period of our lives and the life of the Church. And yet, never before have we been so able to experience how marginal the Church has become, and, even more so, how marginal the community expression of people's life of faith has become.

Setting aside all fruitless polemics, and responsibly embracing our life in our own social and global context we are given the unique opportunity today, in certain respects, to be able to make a long cherished pastoral dream become true. It is possible to go out and build something new compared with what we have been telling ourselves for so long, regarding many aspects of our ecclesial life: from the need to slim down our "pastoral obesity", to the need to return to essentials, including of the proclamation of the Gospel, rethinking the formative path to the Christian life, how to build up communities to the measure of the Gospel, a renewed style of relationships, a rethinking of ministries, not least the priestly ministry, recovering a celebratory quality, maturing real opportunities for standing close to where life is being wounded...



Like all opportunities, however, we can reject them or welcome them, taking them on and investing in them. As a Church community we are also called to do this, without adopting a form of wait-and-see attitude.

We must tell ourselves, with equal frankness, that the fatigue of entering into the new that awaits us also reveals our previous efforts, as is only natural. In fact, there is a risk of offering substitutes, instead of proceeding to a more challenging reflection to jointly seek out new pathways to take. We are sometimes content with mere substitutes, which actually only reveal our fatigue developing real pastoral actions.

No-one, of course, denies that we have done all we could, but nobody should be distracted from what we have and are really delivering

For this reason, questioning ourselves about the fruitful relationship between prophecy and testimony and allowing ourselves to learn the lessons of this present time can enable us to draw on and deliver words of the Gospel, which we all hope will be all the more audible because they are more comprehensible.

Yes. Prophets must necessarily bear witness to a history that is continually being generated by God's faithfulness, just as every witness must speak the truth about what they have seen must inevitably be a prophet, people who draw on their own experience to foretell something that is possible for everyone, something that can be heard by everyone.

The reason why the prophet scrutinises the future is to utter a meaningful and valuable word about the present time. If the witness speaks about the present, it is to say a word about the green shoots that announce a future of beauty and goodness, because it is the work of God.

#### **PROPHETS AND WITNESSES, PROFILES OF THE SAME FACE**

by Fr Ezio Falavegna Parish priest from Verona, lecturer in pastoral theology at the Triveneto Theological Faculty, member of the Missio Foundation Formation Team

**Sunday, 24 October**

#### **WITNESSES AND PROPHETS**

We are called to view this period and the situation all around us through trusting and hopeful eyes. We are certain that, even in the throes of the pandemic and the ensuing crises that will accompany us for a long time to come, our Lord has never abandoned us and is continuing to accompany us. The Kingdom of God is not just a promise of a future that we feel is still too far away. His Kingdom has already been inaugurated, it is already present: we know how to read its signs and, as true missionaries, we make it known to others so that it may be a regenerating hope for all.

Pope Francis' Message for World Mission Day also exhorts us to be witnesses and prophets, with the same courage as Peter and John who, before the leaders of the people and the elders, are not afraid to say: "We cannot but speak about what we have seen and heard " (Acts 4:20). Pope Francis says: "In today's context there is an urgent need for missionaries of hope who, anointed by the Lord, are capable of prophetically reminding us that no one is saved alone. Like the Apostles and the first Christians, we

too say with all our strength: 'We cannot but speak about what we have seen and heard (Acts 4:20)". And further on, Pope Francis adds: "The first Christians, far from yielding to the temptation to become an elite group, were inspired by the Lord and his offer of new life to go out among the nations and to bear witness to what they had seen and heard: the good news that the Kingdom of God is at hand. They did so with the generosity, gratitude and nobility typical of those who sow seeds in the knowledge that others will enjoy the fruit of their efforts and sacrifice. I like to think that "even those who are most frail, limited and troubled can be missionaries in their own way, for goodness can always be shared, even if it exists alongside many limitations".