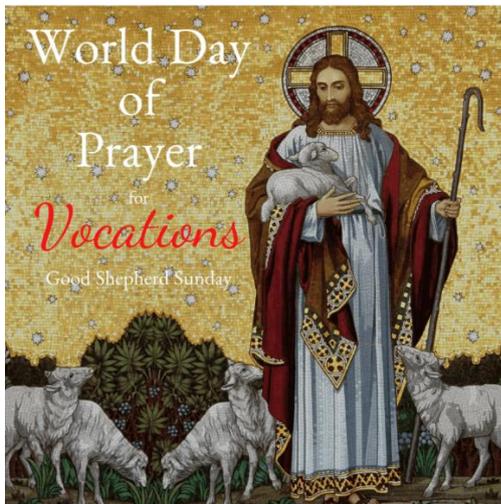


MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS FOR THE 54th WORLD DAY OF PRAYER FOR VOCATIONS



Led by the Spirit for Mission Dear Brothers and Sisters, In the last few years, we have considered two aspects of the Christian vocation: the summons to “go out from ourselves” to hear the Lord’s voice, and the importance of the ecclesial community as the privileged place where God’s call is born, nourished and expressed.

Now, on this 54th World Day of Prayer for Vocations, I would like to reflect on the missionary dimension of our Christian calling. Those who drawn by God’s voice and determined to follow Jesus soon discover within themselves an irrepressible desire to bring the Good News to their brothers and sisters through proclamation and the service of charity. All Christians are called to be missionaries of the Gospel! As disciples, we do not

receive the gift of God’s love for our personal consolation, nor are we called to promote ourselves, or a business concern. We are simply men and women touched and transformed by the joy of God’s love, who cannot keep this experience just to ourselves. For “the Gospel joy which enlivens the community of disciples is a missionary joy (Evangelii Gaudium, 21).

Commitment to mission is not something added on to the Christian life as a kind of decoration, but is instead an essential element of faith itself. A relationship with the Lord entails being sent out into the world as prophets of his word and witnesses of his love.

Even if at times we are conscious of our weaknesses and tempted to discouragement, we need to turn with God with confidence. We must overcome a sense of our own inadequacy and not yield to pessimism, which merely turns us into passive spectators of a dreary and monotonous life. There is no room for fear! God himself comes to cleanse our “unclean lips” and equip us for the mission: “Your guilt has departed and your sin is blotted out. Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, ‘Whom shall I send and who will go for us?’ And I said, ‘Here am I, send me!’” (Is 6:6-8).

In the depths of their heart, all missionary disciples hear this divine voice bidding them to “go about”, as Jesus did, “doing good and healing all” (cf. Acts 10:38). I have mentioned that, by virtue of baptism, every Christian is a “Christopher”, a bearer of Christ, to his brothers and sisters (cf. Catechesis, 30 January 2016). This is particularly the case with those called to a life of special consecration and with priests, who have generously responded, “Here I am, Lord, send me!” With renewed missionary enthusiasm, priests are called to go forth from the sacred precincts of the temple and to let God’s tender love overflow for the sake of humanity (cf. Homily at the Chrism Mass, 24 March 2016).

The Church needs such priests: serenely confident because they have discovered the true treasure, anxious to go out and joyfully to make it known to all (cf. Mt 13:44). Certainly many questions arise when we speak of the Christian mission. What does it mean to be a missionary of the Gospel? Who gives us the strength and courage to preach? What is the evangelical basis and inspiration of mission? We can respond to these questions by meditating on three scenes from the Gospels: the inauguration of Jesus’ mission in the synagogue at Nazareth (cf. Lk 4:16-30); the journey that, after his resurrection, he makes in the company of the disciples of Emmaus (cf. Lk 24:13-35) and, finally, the parable of the sower and the seed (cf. Mt 4:26-27). Jesus is anointed by the Spirit and sent.

From the Vatican, 27 November 2016 First Sunday of Advent - Francis

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