

20 October 2024: World Mission Sunday: “For, the Son of man came to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mk. 10:45)

World Mission Sunday is a day set aside for Catholics worldwide to join in recommitting to the Church’s ongoing missionary activity through sharing prayer, learning and offering financial support. The funds collected on this day go towards supporting the pastoral, catechetical, charitable and evangelizing work of the Church in over 1100 mission dioceses in 120 countries. This year’s theme is: **“Go and invite everyone to the Banquet”**. (Mt. 22:9)

The readings for this Mission Sunday emphasize how Christ came to serve and sacrifice himself for the salvation of all. 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 today’s Gospel reading 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.*

The World Mission Day 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, be 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 Day we pay special attention to the organizations and individuals who do this work in places of extreme 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. Brothers and sisters, let us be missionary disciples of humble service. True Christian leadership is service of one another in response to the real earthly and spiritual needs of the world; because, Jesus - "the son of man came, not to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many". Amen.