

## GOSPEL

*Mark 10:35-45*

James and John, the sons of Zebedee, approached Jesus. 'Master,' they said to him, 'we want you to do us a favour.' He said to them, 'What is it you want me to do for you?' They said to him, 'Allow us to sit one at your right hand and the other at your left in your glory.' 'You do not know what you are asking' Jesus said to them. 'Can you drink the cup that I must drink, or be baptised with the baptism with which I must be baptised?' They replied, 'We can.' Jesus said to them, 'The cup that I must drink you shall drink, and with the baptism with which I must be baptised you shall be baptised, but as for seats at my right hand or my left, these are not mine to grant; they belong to those to whom they have been allotted.'

When the other ten heard this they began to feel indignant with James and John, so Jesus called them to him and said to them: 'You know that among the pagans their so-called rulers lord it over them, and their great men make their authority felt. This is not to happen among you. No; anyone who wants to become great among you must be your servant, and anyone who wants to be first among you must be slave to all. For the Son of Man himself did not come to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.'

## HOMILY OF ST JOHN PAUL II

*17 October 1982 (Translated, Excerpt)*

1. "The Son of Man... did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" ( Mk 10:45): this concluding verse of this Sunday's Gospel passage, read a short while ago, suggests to us the fundamental criterion for understanding the true nature of the missionary vocation, and it helps us to prepare appropriately for World Mission Day, which the Church will celebrate next Sunday. And I am particularly pleased to reflect on this theme precisely in this College of Saint Peter the Apostle, together with you, dear students, who are preparing to be heralds of the Gospel in your lands tomorrow. I greet you one by one, and my thoughts also go to the countries from which you come and which are so dear to my heart.

The criterion mentioned is that of "service", as Jesus lived and taught it. We would distort the Christian meaning of "mission" if we did not illuminate it with this light, if we did not see the mission as "service". This criterion gives the mission its supernatural truth and effectiveness. Who, in fact, is the servant if not the one who is called by the superior and who, out of obedience to him, accepts the task entrusted to him?

Well, the Superior whom the Missionary must serve and by whom he is called is God himself; and the "service" that the Missionary performs is to announce the Word of God to the world. And for what purpose? For the glory of God and the salvation of the brothers, created in the image of God, and loved for the love of God.

2. If such is the missionary vocation, it would be appropriate to reflect on some of its aspects closely linked to the evangelical concept of "service".

The first virtue of the evangelical servant is obedience. The mission, in fact, which is a divine and supernatural task, presupposes a vocation from on high; and one cannot give a concrete response to such a divine call without a spirit of supernatural obedience, without a generous availability to the voice of God who calls us to send us into the world.

What should be the Missionary's obedience?

It comprises his most precious faculties: intellect and will. It must therefore be, first of all, obedience of the intellect to Christ-Truth, and consequently practical adherence of the will: reproducing in us, in the Spirit, the very life of Christ, obedient servant of the Father and first Announcer of His Word, because He Himself is the Word of the Father.

To obey the truth is the first virtue of the Missionary. And it is not always easy: what is needed is that balance and that intellectual honesty which alone allow us to accept with frankness and courage the Truth known with certainty, avoiding pretexts or subterfuges which allow relativism or subjectivism. And on the other hand, we also need that humility which prevents us from assuming or presenting as certain that which is not.

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The Christian Truth to be proclaimed to the world is in itself absolutely certain, universal, intangible, because it comes from an eternal, faithful and immutable God. It is therefore necessary that the Missionary, with a true spirit of faith, make this certainty his own, without attributing his own doubts to the Word of God, and at the same time, without wanting to give to his own transitory human opinions a degree of certainty that only the divine Word can have.

Proclaiming Christ is not and cannot be, as some misinterpret, an act of arrogance in the style of teachers, placing oneself in a higher position than others. On the contrary, it presupposes the humility of accepting and, therefore, communicating a doctrine that is not ours, but God's, considering ourselves servants and debtors to others of this same doctrine.

Being a missionary means "feeling" sent by God because he is truly called by virtue of certain and objective signs derived from listening to the divine voice within, and accredited by the approval and explicit mandate of the Church, which is expressed in its legitimate Pastors. Only this makes the Missionary an authentic servant of divine mercy.

To consider then — as the Missionary must do — that he is in possession of a divine and infallible doctrine such as that of Christ, is not in itself, as some think, an act of presumption, but a humble, certain and proven awareness of having received such doctrine in its entirety and authenticity from the living Magisterium of the Church, to which Christ unceasingly sends his Spirit of Truth.

3. A second point on which we do well to focus our attention is that which concerns the specific nature of the service to be carried out. It consists in the proclamation, as I have said, of the Word of God. Now, it is clear that the servant must be capable of carrying out the task entrusted to him. But proclaiming the Word of God is a task that goes beyond natural forces: it is a supernatural task. The Christian message, by its origin, its content, its purpose, and the ways and means of its transmission, essentially transcends even the most elevated humanitarian or cultural messages, which are oriented towards a simple natural religiosity. The Christian message, by its divine nobility, requires in those who communicate it and in those who receive it a supplement, so to speak, of intelligence: the *intellectus fidei*, to the point of harmonizing the

language of the speaker and the auditory capacity of the listener, with the dignity of its content. In this sense, Saint Paul speaks of a "spiritual language" expressed by "spiritual men" (cf. 1 Cor 2).

Let us never forget, therefore, dear brothers, the sublimity of the gift that the Missionary makes to the world. It is necessary that the Missionary cultivate a lively awareness of its preciousness, with gratitude to God who entrusted it to him, and with the will to remain always with God in that intimate communion of charity and filial obedience which allows him to find the appropriate means to transmit it effectively to the world.

Only by maintaining this attitude of gratitude, filial availability and obedience to the Father, through spiritual communion with Christ and His Church, will the Missionary be able to keep pure in his heart the greatness of the message received, without debasing it or diluting it in the precariousness of earthly ideologies, without making it an instrument of vain glory or worldly power, without thinking of being able to spread it by other means than the evangelical means of poverty, meekness, sacrifice, testimony and prayer, in the virtue and power of the Holy Spirit.

4. A final consideration arises from the concept of mission as service: what does the servant do and for whom does he do it? Not for himself, but for the purposes of the Superior. So it is with the Missionary: he does not work for himself, but for the Kingdom of God and his justice. Here too we have an appeal that goes beyond simply earthly or human perspectives. It is not a question of "consulting flesh and blood" (cf. Gal 1:16), but of listening, in the depths of one's heart, to the "murmur" of that "water" of which the great Bishop-martyr Saint Ignatius of Antioch spoke: that clear and pure water of faith and charity, which said to him: "Come to the Father, offer your life for God and for your brothers" (cf. Letter to the Romans, chap. 6, 1-8, 3; Funk, I, 217-223).

A good servant forgets himself and his own interests in order to carry out the assigned task. The servant of the Gospel will also behave in the same way. However, since this sacrifice goes beyond the strength and reasons of human wisdom, the Missionary, in saying his unconditional "yes" to the Father who sends him into the world, with ever renewed tranquility trusts only in the divine help that will be granted to him especially in the moment of trial, which could even reach the height of martyrdom.

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And when, in the most anguished hour of suffering, it seems to the missionary that all is lost, precisely at that moment the light of faith makes him understand that, united to Jesus crucified and totally trusting in the mercy of the Father, he contributes to spreading the divine light in a much more effective way than he could have achieved through human means, even the most efficient. Not that such means are not useful for the missions, on the contrary, they are blessed; and it is to be desired that they should be continually increased; but they are only instruments to be used according to God's plans and the pastoral demands of His Kingdom.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What stood out to you from the Gospel or Reflection/ Homily?



**Head:** In what ways is being a missionary of the Gospel of Jesus a service to others?



**Heart:** Do you think of yourself as a missionary of the Gospel of Jesus? Why or why not?



**Hands:** St John Paul II tells us there are three aspects to being a missionary: obedience, proclamation of the Word, and remembering who we serve, God. What could we do to grow in each of these areas this week?

## PRAYER

Spend some time in prayer with one another:

1. Conscious of what has just been shared, members briefly name/ describe their prayer needs.
2. Intentionally call on the Holy Spirit to be present (for example, “Come Holy Spirit, please be present as we pray”)
3. Offer prayers of thanks and praise to God.
4. Pray for each others’ prayer needs. Where appropriate, you may like to encourage the group to place a hand on the shoulder of the individual that you are currently praying for.
5. Conclude your prayer time with another prayer of praise, perhaps praying the ‘Glory Be’.