

SECOND SUNDAY OF OCTOBER

DATE: October 8, 2017 (27th Sunday in Ordinary Time)

THEME: The Imperative of *Pauperes Evangelizantur*: “Evangelize the Poor”

READINGS: Is 5:1-7 / Ps 80:9.12.13-14.15-16.19-20 / Phil 4:6-9 / Mt 21: 33-43

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The Imperative of *Pauperes Evangelizantur*: “Evangelize the Poor”

Ariel G. Musngi

This year 2017, His Holiness Pope Francis centers his message for World Mission Sunday on the theme: Mission at the Heart of the Christian Faith. The heart will always be symbolic of the deepest identity of a given reality. It is the most vital and an indispensable condition, if a reality is to meaningfully exist. No wonder our Holy Father has placed mission at the heart of the Christian faith. If our faith is to be meaningful in our life, then mission should be an indispensable condition in our proclaiming and living of the Christian faith.

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me; He has sent me to bring good news to the poor” (Lk 4:18). These words of our Lord place us at the very heart of the mission call, of the mission imperative. It is the fruit of listening to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, even as the same Spirit enables us to positively respond and give witness to the call.

“So He replied to the messengers: Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor” (Lk 7:22). Here we can clearly see that one of the important and infallible signs that the Kingdom is at hand, is that the good news is proclaimed to the poor.

In the Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation, we all have been made sharers in that mission of proclaiming the Good News to the poor, to be bearers of the Good News that the Kingdom of God is at hand. This Kingdom spells friendship, fellowship and brotherhood, the dignity of one family with one God as Father. The imperative of proclaiming the good news to

the poor has always been in the mind of the Church. We once again are made to renew this call and commitment if we are to continue to be a responding Church.

Father Antonio M. Pernia, SVD, one of our more respected missiologists in the country and internationally, wrote a very inspiring and challenging article in the Journal *Missio Inter Gentes*: “The Stranger and the Poor: Two Challenges to the Missionary Church in *Evangelii Gaudium*.” It is a call to respond more sincerely in the growing multi-culturality of today’s world and the continuing poverty of our people. It speaks of the summons and call of our brothers and sisters from the borders and the margins, that is, those who are not completely like us in culture, language, looks and religion, those who are basically and materially in need continuously.

In this article we are confronted with the lessons and the values we heard and learned when we were yet kids: “Don’t talk to strangers”; “Choose your friends”; “Stay away from the poor.” While there is wisdom in these words and caution because of the many sad stories we heard in not heeding the advice, it is also very important to look and reflect on the other side of this reality. Christ our Lord related the story of the Good Samaritan in an effort to teach us a very important lesson. It is the lesson of the universality of the human race, transcending the boundaries and margins of racial and ethnic groups, culture, religion and economic condition. It is the lesson of the nobility of recognizing neighbors among the strangers and the poor. It is a lesson that evolves into a challenge. It is a challenge that we encounter daily in our times. It is a challenge that invites us to a dialogue of life, a course of action born in prayer, reflection and commitment to faith.

The pain of separation and the agony of being left out invite us to reflect on how it is to be in the borders and how it is to be in the margins. Now, more than ever, we cannot deny that our world has been turned literally into one global village. The border and the margin is everywhere. If we are to remain apathetic and indifferent to these realities, then we contribute to the sad side of division. If we embark on a commitment to Christian mission, extending our hands, our arms and indeed our hearts to our brothers and sisters from the borders and the margins, then truly, we give our share in the building of the Kingdom. Seeing the face of Christ in the poor, the destitute, the strangers and the lost is the beginning of the mission which is the heart of the Christian Faith.

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