

October 6: Exploring Mission Motivation

The final verse of today's Gospel from Saint Luke (17:10) succinctly captures how we as Christ's disciples should view ourselves and our Christian commitment; we are to simply consider ourselves as *servants*. We are not to *expect* rewards from God. We do not somehow *earn* rewards; our works do not *merit* God's benevolence. Such attitudes reflect the ancient Pelagian heresy, which Pope Francis critiques in his recent document on holiness in today's world (*Gaudete et Exsultate*, 47-59).

As Pope Francis explains: "His friendship infinitely transcends us; we cannot buy it with our works; it can only be a gift born of his loving initiative" (54). "We cannot celebrate this free gift of the Lord's friendship unless we realize that our earthly life and natural abilities are his gift. We need to acknowledge jubilantly that our life is essentially a gift, and recognize that our freedom is a grace" (55). It is only "on the basis of God's gift, freely accepted and humbly received" (56), that we become truly God's missionary servants.

Yet, we may ask: Why evangelize and engage in mission? The Asian Bishops (FABC) have enunciated an insightful perspective on our service and "motivation for mission." They note five motives: "We evangelize, first of all, from a deep sense of *gratitude to God*.... Mission is above all else an overflow of this life from grateful hearts transformed by the grace of God.... But mission is also a *mandate*. We evangelize because we are sent into the whole world to make disciples of all nations.... We evangelize also because we *believe* in the Lord Jesus.... We evangelize also because we have been *incorporated by baptism into the Church*, which is missionary by its very nature.... And finally, we evangelize because the Gospel is *leaven* for liberation and for the transformation of society. These are authentic motives of Jesus' missionary servants!