

Who Are Truly Blessed?

Today's short Gospel is only two verses; each verse contains the same word "blessed," *makarios* in Greek and *beatus* in Latin. Commonly translated into English as "blessed," this word also means: happy, blissful, joyful, fortunate, fulfilled. It refers to a state of spiritual well-being; one experiences genuine joy in one's soul. When the word refers to a person, it means that this one is held in reverence and respected. Who are such persons that deserve to be called "blessed"? Jesus' answer is clear and direct: "Blessed are they who hear the Word of God and keep it." These words open a pathway for a profound reflection on our Christian missionary vocation.

Recent popes have emphasized integrating the "hearing" and "keeping" of God's Word; one must be a "listener" and a "doer"! Evangelization demands both contemplation and concrete action. Recall the challenge presented by Pope Paul VI in *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (41): "Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses."

Pope John Paul II refers to this insight of Paul VI in *Redemptoris Missio* (42): "People today put more trust in witnesses than in teachers, in experience than in teaching, and in life and action than in theories." Pope Francis combines "hearing" God's Word as disciples and "doing" the Word as missionaries in *Evangelii Gaudium* (120): "we no longer say that we are 'disciples' and 'missionaries,' but rather that we are always 'missionary disciples'."

The New Testament reveals that the first person to receive the honor of being called blessed is none other than Mary herself. Pope Francis emphasizes Mary's path of faith as an example for all Christians, inspiring us to live out our Christian mission. We pray: Blessed Mary, Star of Evangelization, strengthen our faith to truly become your Son's missionary disciples!