



The Holy Spirit Province NEWSLETTER

13 October 2021



OUR SHARED CALLING FROM GOD: 29TH SUNDAY B

Isaiah 53:10-11; Hebrews 4:14-16; Mark 10:35-45

In our gospel today Jesus reminds us that he 'did not come to be served but to serve', and to give his life for the wellbeing of others (Mk 10:45). As for Jesus, so for us! Has he not said of us: 'As the Father has sent me, so I send you' (Jn 20:21)? Today, then, let us reflect on our shared mission, our shared vocation, our shared calling from God. In a nutshell, it's about being ministers and missionaries, ministers and missionaries of God's goodness and love.

The word 'ministry' simply means 'service'. Any service, any outreach, given to other people in need may be called a 'ministry'. The service of others flows, in the first place, from our shared humanity, our being human beings together. For example! Just last week, a nurse told me that on her two days-off each week, she welcomes people to her home, where she teaches them for free how to cook. One husband eagerly looks forward to the result of his wife's lessons. It's such a nice change from a jar of 'Chicken Tonight' on just about everything! Steve Irwin, known far and wide as 'the Crocodile Hunter', worked energetically all his life for the conservation of the environment and the preservation of many species of animals.

Any true service that anyone does, whether they are aware of this or not, is working for that better world of goodness and kindness, justice and joy, love and peace, that Jesus called the 'kingdom of God' on earth. For us Christians, our service of others also flows from our connection with Jesus Christ and his gift of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of Jesus empowers us to go out and tell everyone everywhere, by word, deed, and example, the good news of the never-ending love shown us by Jesus Christ. So being a minister and missionary of God's love means loving others in all the ways that Jesus loved people.

A glance through the gospels gives us glimpse after glimpse of the many different ways in which Jesus loved and served others. He treated everyone with truthfulness and respect, fairness and love; he prayed for them; he felt distress and compassion for those in pain; he healed and liberated lots; he rejoiced and celebrated with those who were glad. He reached out most of all to those who were the 'little ones' of Jewish society - the poor, the sick, the social outcasts, and those, such as women, who were treated contemptuously, cruelly and unjustly. He befriended sinners so much that the Pharisees complained to his disciples: 'Why is it that your Master eats with tax collectors and sinners?' (Mk 2:16; Lk 6:30).

So, Christians, like Jesus, serve others by proclaiming the truth of God and the laws of God, by praying, giving a good example, acting to defend human rights, and by being respectful, fair, kind, compassionate, caring and forgiving towards others. His teaching and example have left us with a brilliant example of an authentic life, for becoming the best people we can be.

Vatican II was the first church council ever, to spell out the meaning of mission and ministry. It taught that the whole church is missionary, and that to be a Christian is to be both a follower of Jesus and an agent of his love to others. It taught that all baptised people share in the one priesthood of Jesus Christ and are responsible for carrying out the mission of the Church in the world. It emphasized humble, loving service rather than status, honours, robes, titles and privileges. It also said that as Christians all members of the church are equal.

Since the Council (1962-1965), there has been nothing less than an explosion of lay ministries and activities of every kind - to sick, disabled and dying people; to bereaved families; to dysfunctional families; to youth; to migrants and refugees; to battered wives, and other people in need of counselling, therapy, and protection. Laypersons function as pastoral associates, teachers, principals, parish councillors, catechists, readers, ministers of communion, musicians and singers, prayer leaders, artists, and architects. There are nurses, doctors, ambos and other health workers, who view their services as Christian ministries.

Some laypersons are campus ministers, social workers, prison visitors, day-care workers, and foster parents. Others contribute their love and skills to the rehabilitation of alcoholics and drug addicts. Some work in marriage tribunals and marriage counselling, some as experts in church law, givers of retreats, and spiritual directors, and still others in the areas of social justice, ecumenical and inter-faith dialogue and co-operation. Some go out of their way to give loving support to the lonely. In some places lay people have become, equivalently, the pastors of parishes. Night and day, mothers and fathers of families everywhere, keep laying down their lives for their children. There's nothing they would not do to help them.

The explosion of such lay ministries is a fulfilment in our time of what St Paul said about his: 'To each person is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good' (1 Cor 12:7). He notes that the Holy Spirit distributes a variety of gifts to a variety of people for a variety of ways of serving God and God's people. (vv.4-6).

That, briefly, is what I mean by being a minister and a missionary. It's a vocation to which we are every one of us is called both by our humanity and by our baptism. Today, therefore, let us renew our firm and sincere commitment to keep living as disciples of Jesus and missionaries of his love, in our very broken and needy world!

May the passion of Jesus Christ and his everlasting love be always within our minds and hearts!

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