

Homily for the 29th Sunday of the Year – Mission Sunday

One of the great blessings for us as a parish here in Saddleworth is the wonderful link we have made with literally hundreds of people in Nicaragua with whom we celebrate Mass every Sunday. The link began with Fr Ernesto, may he rest in peace, but our joining for the celebration of Mass with Fr Luis. Thanks to modern technology on the one hand, and the hard work and faithfulness of so many people in villages outside of Managua on the other, we are reminded on a weekly basis that we belong to a global Church. Today this is especially relevant because it is Mission Sunday which will be celebrated in every parish throughout the whole world. It is as though we are joining hands in solidarity and prayer, crossing oceans and continents and recognising that we are sisters and brothers, making up the one Body of Christ.

In the first reading today the Lord says to Cyrus – I have called you by your name. Cyrus did not belong to the people of God, indeed he was their conqueror and yet God called him by name to bring about a change in fortunes for God's people. Can we, today, just pause and hear the same words spoken to each one of us, I have called you by your name, and then in the silence of our hearts, say our name? If we can, then the next question to ask ourselves is – to what is God calling us? We can't all be missionaries in the sense of going to different parts of the world, but we can all be missionary disciples by supporting those women and men who are missionaries, by our prayers and by whatever we can give, knowing that the money will be used for the growth of the Church and the spread of the Gospel in predominantly impoverished and remote areas overseas, building much needed infrastructure including chapels, schools, orphanages, clinics, dispensaries and the like, all of which we take for granted.

So today we are being called to be generous, and generosity is part of a wider call to live the gospel by acting justly, loving tenderly and walking humbly before our God. In the second reading St Paul reminded the Thessalonians that they had been chosen by the God who loves them and loves us. It is only because God loves us first that we can respond by, using St Paul's words, putting our faith into action, working for love and persevering in hope. This reminds us that the Good News is not just words, but actions, which we know speak louder than words.

Last Thursday we kept the memory of St Teresa of Avila who once said "Yours are the eyes through which Christ looks with compassion upon the world. Yours are the hands with which Christ blesses the world." In these pandemic ridden times the temptation is to concentrate only on the very real problems at home, more infections, insecurity, rising unemployment. Mission Sunday reminds us that there are so many people in need of compassion, be they in refugee camps, unjustly imprisoned, blighted by hunger, suffering under oppressive regimes. So today we are invited to link arms with people at home and throughout the world, having eyes of compassion, and reaching out with hands of blessing, acknowledging that we have been chosen and indeed called by name to try meet the spiritual and materials needs of people, and to receive blessings in return.

Bidding Prayers for Mission Sunday – provided by Missio (APF)

Celebrant:

On this World Mission Sunday, we unite with the whole Church in praying for the coming of God's Kingdom.

Reader:

For all missionaries, women and men dedicated to sharing the Gospel with those who have not yet received it – that they be given the strength and courage to persevere in their mission.

Lord in your mercy

For young and growing Catholic communities across the world – that our prayers and charity will give them courage to persevere in their mission of proclaiming the Gospel.

Lord in your mercy

For those who live in areas of war, poverty and injustice – that we may help to heal wounds, build bridges, strengthen relationships and bear one another's burdens.

Lord in your mercy

For those who are suffering, grieving and anxious – that we may strive together as one family of many nations to help those in greatest need.

Lord in your mercy

For those who have died, all victims of violence, accident, natural disaster and the Covid pandemic, and Pauline Higgins, Mary Greenwood, John Kehoe, Mary Margaret Palmer, Denis Greenwood and Edmund Bottomley whose anniversaries occur this week – that they and all who have died may rest in peace and rise in glory.

Lord in your mercy

Either aloud or in silence we pray for our own special intentions...pause...then

Lord in your mercy

We ask the prayers of Mary, the missionary disciple of her Son, as we say, Hail Mary...

Celebrant:

God our Father, your Son calls us to be missionary disciples. May your Church abound in love and compassion that the joy of the Gospel will fill the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen