



Twenty-Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time C
October 20, 2019

WORLD MISSION SUNDAY
Going to the “Peripheries”

Each year, our universal church family sets aside one Sunday to focus on our call to be a missionary church.

The first missionary mandate was given by Jesus before he ascended into heaven. He said to his disciples: “Go into the whole world and preach the Good News.” Then it became the mission of Jesus’ disciples to continue his work and to go to places he never went to in the flesh. Those first disciples mainly took the Good News to surrounding areas. Paul took the Gospel to places like Syria and Greece. The next generations of Christians continued to spread the Gospel to Europe and other places.

In the fifteenth century, as explorers discovered new worlds, the Gospel was literally taken to “the ends of the earth” by wonderful and courageous missionaries who boarded the explorer ships and sailed to the Americas, Japan, the Philippines, Africa, Australia and other places. We can assume none of them knew the native languages. You can read more about this exciting story in my Church History articles on our website (Article 11).

Raised not to evangelize

Those of us who were born in the 40’s, 50’s, 60’s, 70’s, and 80’s heard little about our call to be evangelizers. In fact, we tended to see the term evangelization as a Protestant word. The motto of many of us raised in those decades (especially in the pre-Vatican II era) was: “Keep politics and religion private.” I remember presiding at a funeral over 20 years ago where a Catholic co-worker of the deceased said to me: “I worked beside Mike (the deceased) for 10 years and I never knew he was Catholic.” Obviously, the deceased man succeeded very well at keeping his faith very private.

The New Evangelization

In the last 10 years of his pontificate, Pope John Paul II started to talk about the “New Evangelization.” By this, he meant the great need to do two things:

- a) re-evangelize non-churchgoing Catholics, and
- b) evangelize churchgoing Catholics who were private about their faith.

Pope Francis

In 2013, Pope Francis issued an *Apostolic Exhortation* called *The Joy of the Gospel*. It is truly a wonderful letter. The following are two paragraphs from the *Exhortation*.

Evangelization takes place in obedience to the missionary mandate of Jesus: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you” (Mt 28:19-20). In these verses we see how the risen Christ sent his followers to preach the Gospel in every time and place, so that faith in him might spread to every corner of the earth.

The word of God constantly shows us how God challenges those who believe in him “to go forth.” Abraham received the call to set out for a new land (cf. Gn 12:1-3). Moses heard God’s call: “Go, I send you” (Ex 3:10) and led the people toward the Promised Land (cf. Ex 3:17). In our day Jesus’ command to “go and make disciples” echoes in the changing scenarios and ever new challenges to the Church’s mission of evangelization, and all of us are called to take part in this new missionary “going forth.” Each Christian and every community must discern the path that the Lord points out, but all of us are asked to obey his call to go forth from our own comfort zone in order to reach all the “peripheries” in need of the light of the Gospel.

In a statement on this year’s World Mission Sunday, Pope Francis says to us:

“This missionary mandate touches us personally: I am a mission, always; you are a mission, always; every baptized man and woman is a mission.”

**Two examples of outreach to the “peripheries”—
our Sister Diocese in the Dominican Republic and
our Sister Parish in Uganda**

Our Diocese has had a relationship with the Diocese of San Juan De la Maguana in the Dominican Republic for over 30 years. During some of those years, one of our priests has spent some years there. One of the departments of our diocese is the Mission Office. The contact person there is Caroline (407-246-4890). Sr. Bernadette Mackay has been the most consistent presence from the Diocese in our Sister Diocese. There are five communities that we work with there. For the past several years, we have sent some teens there for a mission experience [see the three photos of last year’s teen group→].

I have been to our Sister Diocese a few times. Lots of great work has taken place down there during the past 30 years and much good work continues. Over the past couple of decades, Ascension has helped with many projects in our Sister Diocese and, of course, we have always taken up the Annual Special Collection for our Mission Office.

Outreach to Uganda

As I write this column on World Mission Sunday, I think to myself that travelling to the Dominican Republic would be much easier than travelling to Uganda. But somehow, I trust our Lord intended for me to go to Uganda last June. And God willing, I plan on returning next June for probably two weeks. Last summer, it was very inspiring to see what a difference one parish in our diocese is making. Now I feel all we need to do is help them. I am very happy to report that the response to join in the good work of Blessed Trinity Parish in Ocala has been very positive. Thus far we have received:

- ◆ 6 gifts of \$5,000 for 6 classrooms.
- ◆ 78 elementary school sponsorships (\$210 each)
- ◆ 9 high school sponsorships (\$250 each)
- ◆ One donation of \$300 for a monstrance
- ◆ Some other small donations for miscellaneous items like a bike for a catechist

Lots of other people have told me that they are going to help. So a big Thank You to all of you who have helped so far and will help in the future.

I have forwarded some of the money already to Blessed Trinity Parish and will forward the rest soon. Frankly, I am VERY GLAD to have another parish administer the disbursements—a parish with 13 years of experience doing this overseeing our donations. So far 99% of the donations are going towards our Ascension Sister School.

If interested in travelling to Uganda with us next June, let me know. If you know of any dentists who might be interested in going, please have them contact me.

If you would like to participate in our outreach to Ascension School in Uganda, write your check to Ascension Church, noting down “Ascension School Uganda” on the memo line.

Have a blessed week,

Fr. Aaron



**Goals for our
Ascension Sister
School**

- ◆ Build school with proper classrooms (they are currently meeting in the Church)
- ◆ Get sponsorships for each student
- ◆ Hire some trained teachers and get training for current teachers