

THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH IN THE WORLD

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Homily of the 14th Sunday of the Year, July 3, 2011
Zech. 9:9-10, Ps. 144, Rom. 8:9, 11-13, Matt. 11:25-30

“All things have been delivered to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and any one to whom the Son chooses to reveal him” (Matt. 11:27).

Here we see the deepest foundation of Christian mission—the relationship between the Father and the Son and the mission of the Son to reveal the Father to the world. Only the Son can reveal the Father, for only the Son knows the Father—“No one knows the Father except the Son” (Matt. 11:27). Truly, “no one has ever seen God; the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known” (John 1:18). This is why the Father sent the Son into the world, to make known the Father, whom no one knows except the Son. The Son, therefore, was sent into the world by the Father as his revealer. By means of the Son and through faith in him, we can know the Father. Since the Son is the only one who knows the Father, the Son has a mission to the world. The Son called disciples and sent them also into the world to continue and extend his own mission. Only they know the Father, for the Son revealed him to them. If only the Son knows the Father, then only those to whom the Son has revealed him know the Father. “No one knows the Father except the Son and any one to whom the Son chooses to reveal him” (Matt. 11:27). This knowledge of the Father, which the Son has revealed to his disciples, is all the teaching which Christ has left us in the gospels.

We also know from the scriptures that the Son greatly desires that this knowledge of the Father be spread throughout the world by means of the mission of his disciples, because he gave them the great commission to be his witnesses unto the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). After their death, still other disciples, taught by the previous generation of disciples, will continue this mission until the end of the world. This is the work of the Church, her mission in the world. The Church is the community of the followers of Jesus Christ who believe in him and who therefore know the Father and reveal him to their neighbors and unto the ends of the earth. Christ gave his Church the great commission to bring the gospel of salvation unto the ends of the earth. He said to his disciples, “You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

Only these disciples know the Father, and therefore they have a mission to every part of the world, beginning in Jerusalem and Judea, their home town and their own province. This has continued until today. As followers of Christ, we too are the only ones who know the Father, and therefore we are given a mission to make him known wherever we are, to our neighbors, and in our home town and province. We begin, as they did, in our own town and country. But the mission of the Church is not limited to our own country. Rather, it extends unto the ends of the earth.

It is not that every Christian has to leave his country and go to other countries, but yes, some are called by Christ to do precisely that. These are the missionaries who go to other cultures and preach Christ in other languages to those who still do not know him. In the Church, there are organizations, agencies, societies, and religious orders that specialize in this work and do it in the name of the whole Church. Thus the Church fulfills her mission, which Christ gave her, of revealing the Father to the world.

Without this mission, the world will not know the Father, for without this mission the world will not know the Son, who is the only one who knows the Father, and the only one who has revealed him to us. Without knowing the Son, no one knows the Father. Therefore it is of the greatest importance that this mission be fulfilled by the Church. Although it is theoretically possible to know something about God through human reason (Rom. 1:19-20), in reality there is a great deal of confusion (Rom. 1:21-23). Therefore God sent us a Savior and a Revealer, his only Son Jesus Christ. He who sees the Son sees the Father. "He who has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:9).

Christ, therefore, is the only way to the Father. Only through this way can we come to know the Father and be united to him. Jesus said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me" (John 14:6). Christ is the only way to the Father. There is no other way, for "there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

The mission of the Church is based on this fact. If there is no other name by which we can be saved, then we have a serious obligation to make this name known to every person in all parts of the world. This is the clearly revealed will of God. We know that this is his will, because Christ gave the Church its great commission, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15 NKJV). He did not say, 'Let each culture have its own religion,' but rather, "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” (Matt. 28:19-20). He also said, “As the Father has sent me, even so I send you” (John 20:21).

This is our part, what God wants his Church to do for the salvation of the world. We commend to the mercy of God those whom we cannot reach, for he has his own means of revealing his Son to them. The word of the gospel can pass from one person to another by word of mouth in ways unbeknown to us and save those who seem far from the gospel. We leave this to God, but our work and responsibility are clear and are revealed in scripture. We are to preach Christ unto the ends of the earth, for “no one knows the Father except the Son and any one to whom the Son chooses to reveal him” (Matt. 11:27).