

October 18, 2009

You and I have many gifts for which to thank God each day. I begin my daily prayer of thanksgiving with gratitude for the gifts of life and faith. Through the waters of Baptism, we were made members of the Body of Christ and the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit. The awesome gift of faith invites us to communion and mission.

We are privileged to live in the life and love of the Blessed Trinity. Because we are members of the one Body of Christ, we are also called to live in loving communion with each other. At the Last Supper, Jesus prayed that His disciples would live in union with one another and share the love of God with each other. Hence, the two great commandments: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your strength, and love your neighbor as yourself.”

With faith and Baptism comes a responsibility for mission. Each of us is to use our talents and opportunities to share with others the healing, reconciling love of Christ. By word and example, we are to bring more justice, love, and peace into our families, parishes, neighborhoods, and workplaces.

This Sunday, Catholics around the world celebrate World Mission Sunday. This celebration reminds us of Jesus’ expectation that we extend the reconciling love of Christ and the hope which comes from His Gospel beyond our immediate environment.

Before Jesus ascended into heaven, He told His apostles: “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes down on you; then you are to be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, yes, even to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:9).

In St. Matthew's Gospel (28:18-20), Jesus speaks to us in these words before ascending into heaven: "Full authority has been given to me, both in heaven and on earth; go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations. Baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Teach them to carry out everything I have commanded you. And know that I am with you always, until the end of the world!"

Jesus asks us to share with others the gifts of faith, Baptism, and the wisdom of His Gospel. We are generally preoccupied with this responsibility as we raise our families and conduct the many ministries within our parishes. As we personally rejoice in the blessings of our faith, we naturally want to share those blessings with our friends, family, and loved ones.

World Mission Sunday reminds us that all Catholics are responsible to carry the light of Christ to lands where He is not known. Missionary priests, religious, and lay faithful dedicate their entire lives to spreading the hope of the Gospel to such lands.

We are called to stand in solidarity with missionaries, first of all through our prayer, both at Mass and in our own private prayers and sacrifices, secondly, through our financial support. Our own faith is strengthened when we desire to share it with others.

Please be generous with your prayers, sacrifices, and material support in behalf of those dedicating their lives in behalf of the Gospel in the mission fields.