

Homily of Twenty-Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A, 2026

Isaiah 45:1, 4-6; Psalm 96:1, 3-5, 7-10; 1 Thessalonians 1:1-5; Matthew 22:15-21

Today is World Mission Sunday. It is a Sunday set aside for Catholics worldwide to recommit themselves to the Church's missionary activities through prayer and sacrifice. We are invited to pray constantly for the success of the Church's missionary activities all over the world. In addition to our prayers, we are also invited to offer material and financial support. We are all missionaries, either by going to the missions, or by praying for missionaries, or by giving to support or sustain the missions. We pray for men and women of goodwill who sacrifice their resources to support God's work in the missions. Also, in a special way, we pray for mission areas where Christians are persecuted, especially in Nigeria.

World Mission Day 2026 marks the 100th anniversary of its establishment by Pope Pius XI in 1926. Pope Leo chose the theme "One in Christ, united in mission." He says, "... the more united we are in Christ, the better able we will be to carry out together the mission that he entrusts to us. ... The Pope maintains, "If unity is the condition of mission, love is its essence." This is to say that love is the binding force and the driving force of mission. The Pope echoes Prophet Amos, "Do two journey together unless they have agreed?" (Amos 3:3). Can two agree unless there is love? Pope Leo prays, "May all members of the Church be united in mission, docile to the Holy Spirit, courageous in bearing witness to the Gospel. ..."

The readings present to us individuals God sent on various missions. In the first reading, God anointed a Persian pagan, Cyrus, to become a king and gave him the mission to set the people of Israel free from the Babylonian captivity. In the second reading, God gave Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy the mission of preaching the Good News. We recall that Paul was a persecutor of Christians, but God made him "a chosen instrument." Silvanus and Timothy were converts to Christianity who became Paul's co-workers and became great missionaries. If God used Cyrus, Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy as his chosen instruments, not minding their past and former ways of life, we are encouraged that God calls everyone and wants to use everyone to continue the mission of Jesus at various levels. Everyone is qualified!

Jesus tells us in today's gospel, "Repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God." Caesar is our comfort, personal needs, desires, aspirations, pressures and demands of life. We know that overdraft payment to Caesar easily swings many people away from God and put them in spiritual negative balance. Jesus reminds us that it must not be so with us. While we devote time to personal needs, desires, aspirations, pressures and demands of life, we must devote time to our relationship with God.

Sadly, since governance, the society, and the world do not give to God what belong to him, the result is the chaos everywhere. It is the same with ourselves. Whenever our mission excludes God, the mission becomes chaotic. We need to bear in mind that our neighbor in need, our church, our ministry, every walk of life, every task, every talent, and every responsibility is God's mission for us. Mission is in faraway lands and within and around us. Therefore, God must not be left out of any mission.

There are three phases of mission: Phase one is CALL to mission from God. Phase two is ACCEPTANCE of mission from us. Phase three is GOD'S GRACE for the mission. Every mission of God has its trials. For that reason, when God sends us on a mission, he gives us the grace. The Lord said to St. Paul and says to us, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9). We undertake our missions not by power or by might but by God's Spirit and grace.

I belong to the Missionary Society of St. Paul of Nigeria. At our priestly ordination, we are given a crucifix. We go to our missions with the crucifix, which is a constant reminder that in mission good times and bad times, we are disciples of the Crucified Christ. His grace will always be enough.

To conclude, we take our minds back to the theme Pope Leo chose for 2026 World Mission Sunday, "One in Christ, united in mission." Here in our parish, our catchphrase is "One Family, One Love." Today we add, "One Family, One Love, One Mission." As your priest, it is not my mission, or anyone's mission, but God's mission; and God's mission is our mission. God's mission is that everyone be saved and come to know the truth (1 Timothy 2:4). Like Cyrus, Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, we all are God's chosen instruments. The only way to go on God's mission is to agree in love and journey together in truth. May God give us all the graces we need. Amen.

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