



During World Youth Day of 1995, the theme song that reverberated through the entire celebration and even beyond it was to “tell the world of God’s love.” This theme was taken from this Sunday’s Gospel from St John.

Telling the world of God’s love is rooted from the very mission of Jesus. This mission is two fold. Its **FIRST PURPOSE** is to manifest God’s unconditional and compassionate love for humankind. To reveal God is the heart of Jesus’ mission, the key to understanding all that Jesus says and does.

Pope Francis continually insists that mercy is the very essence of God. In his *Misericordiae Vultus* (The Face of Mercy) Francis expresses it this way: mercy is God’s identity card. He says: “We need constantly to contemplate the mystery of mercy. It is a wellspring of joy, serenity, and peace.... Mercy [is] the bridge that connects God and man” (MV 2). Francis quotes Saint Thomas Aquinas, who asserts that “mercy is the greatest of all virtues; ... all the others revolve around it ... it is proper to God to have mercy” (EG 37). “Mercy is the very foundation of the Church’s life. All of her pastoral activity should

TELL THE WORLD OF GOD’S LOVE



by Fr. Jesus Malit, SSS

be caught up in the tenderness she makes present to believers; nothing in her preaching and in her witness to the world can be lacking in mercy. The Church’s very credibility is seen in how she shows merciful and compassionate love” (MV 10).

The disciple must come to realize and experience this intense love of God in his own life as Jesus, the master, did. He must be burning with the same love revealed to him through his friendship with the master.

The **SECOND PURPOSE** of

Jesus’ mission is to save the world by sharing God’s own love and life with all men and women who will come to him in faith: “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son...that the world might be saved through him” (Jn 3:16-17). A disciple is someone who believes that God has revealed his infinite love for us in Jesus, the Son of God, and who demonstrates this love of God for all by loving his brothers and sisters as Jesus loved them. This two fold mission of Jesus becomes even more significant as we celebrate the 5th centenary of the arrival of Christianity on Philippine soil. The theme chosen by the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) notes: all Christians are “gifted to give.” This “giftedness” motivated generous missionaries over the centuries; it must also enflame the hearts of all of us today to engage in mission here at home and in other countries (*missio ad gentes*). Indeed, this is part of Jesus’ mission mandate to his disciples: “What you have received as a gift, give as a gift” (Mt 10:8). We pray for a missionary renewal of our Church—both at home (*ad intra*) and beyond our borders (*ad extra*) during our celebration of the 500 years—and into the future!

PASTORAL CATECHESIS FOR THE YEAR OF *MISSIO AD GENTES*

Church Guidance in Uncertain Times

Fr. James H. Kroeger, MM

The lengthy visit of Pope John Paul II in early 1981 brought two clear messages to Filipinos: a need for dynamic faith in their lives and an emphasis on justice and peace. Specifically, the Pope told the president and government leaders: “Even in exceptional situations that may at times arise, one can never justify any violation of the fundamental dignity of the human person or of the basic rights that safeguard this dignity.”

Two years later, the assassination of Benigno Aquino on August 21, 1983 ushered in a period of national mourning and a widespread clamor for justice and truth. In this

highly charged atmosphere, Jaime Cardinal Sin, Archbishop of Manila since 1974, cautioned Filipinos: “If we allow his death to fan the flames of violence and division, then he will have died in vain.”

Events moved rapidly in the ensuing years. Filipino consciousness had been awakened. The Church did not remain on the sidelines. Following the elections of 1986, the Catholic bishops issued a statement declaring that fraud provides no moral legitimacy for any regime. If citizens agreed that the election had been “stolen,” they should oblige the regime to respect their will. The bishops added: “But we insist: Our acting must always be according to the Gospel of Christ, that is, in a peaceful, non-violent way.” Filipinos welcomed the prophetic voice of the Church!

THE INTRODUCTORY RITES

Entrance Antiphon

(Cf. Is 66:10–11)

(Recited when there is no opening song.)

Rejoice, Jerusalem, and all who love her. Be joyful, all who were in mourning; exult and be satisfied at her consoling breast.

Greeting

(The sign of the cross is made here.)

P — The Lord be with you.

All — **And with your spirit.**

Introduction

(These [or similar words] may be used to address the assembly.)

P — The spirit of Lent invites us to recall our sins and failings, and moves us to be sorry for them. Our sorrow over our dark past, however, should lead, not to pessimism, but to hope. Because we have been gifted with the immeasurable riches of God's grace, we have come to the light and are called to bring Christ's light to our world.

Penitential Act

P — Brethren (brothers and sisters), let us acknowledge our sins, and so prepare ourselves to celebrate the sacred mysteries. *(Pause)*

P — Have mercy on us, O Lord.

All — **For we have sinned against you.**

P — Show us, O Lord, your mercy.

All — **And grant us your salvation.**

P — May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins, and bring us to everlasting life.

All — **Amen.**

P — Lord, have mercy.

All — **Lord, have mercy.**

P — Christ, have mercy.

All — **Christ, have mercy.**

P — Lord, have mercy.

All — **Lord, have mercy.**

(The Gloria is omitted.)

Collect

P — Let us pray. *(Pause)*

O God, who through your

Word reconcile the human race to yourself in a wonderful way, grant, we pray, that with prompt devotion and eager faith the Christian people may hasten toward the solemn celebrations to come.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

All — **Amen.**

THE LITURGY OF THE WORD



First Reading (2 Chr 36:14–16, 19–23) *(Sit)*

Because of their sinfulness, the inhabitants of the southern kingdom of Judah were deported to Babylon. God ended the people's exile by inspiring the Persian King Cyrus to let them return to their country.

A reading from the second Book of Chronicles

IN THOSE DAYS, all the princes of Judah, the priests, and the people added infidelity to infidelity, practicing all the abominations of the nations and polluting the LORD's temple which he had consecrated in Jerusalem.

Early and often did the LORD, the God of their fathers, send his messengers to them, for he had compassion on his people and his dwelling place. But they mocked the messengers of God, despised his warnings, and scoffed at his prophets, until the anger of the LORD against his people was so inflamed that there was no remedy. Their enemies burnt the house of God, tore down the walls of Jerusalem, set all its palaces afire, and destroyed all its precious objects. Those who escaped the sword were carried captive to Babylon, where they became servants of the king of the Chaldeans and his sons until the kingdom of the Persians came to power. All this was to fulfill the word of the Lord spoken by Jeremiah: "Until the land has retrieved

its lost sabbaths, during all the time it lies waste it shall have rest while seventy years are fulfilled."

In the first year of Cyrus, king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah, the LORD inspired King Cyrus of Persia to issue this proclamation throughout his kingdom, both by word of mouth and in writing: "Thus says Cyrus, king of Persia: All the kingdoms of the earth the LORD, the God of heaven, has given to me, and he has also charged me to build him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever, therefore, among you belongs to any part of his people, let him go up, and may his God be with him!"

— The word of the Lord.

All — **Thanks be to God.**

Responsorial Psalm (Ps 137)

R — **Let my tongue be silenced, if I ever forget you!**

Sr. M. C. A. Parco, FSP



1. By the streams of Babylon/ we sat and wept/ when we remembered Zion./ On the aspens of that land/ we hung up our harps. **(R)**

2. For there our captors asked of us/ the lyrics of our songs,/ and our despoilers urged us to be joyous:/ "Sing for us the songs of Zion!" **(R)**

3. How could we sing a song of the LORD/ in a foreign land?/ If I forget you, Jerusalem,/ may my right hand be forgotten! **(R)**

4. May my tongue cleave to my palate/ if I remember you not,/ if I place not Jerusalem/ ahead of my joy. **(R)**

Second Reading (Eph 2:4–10)

The apostle Paul declares that what saves us, what gives hope, is not our own efforts but God's grace and mercy.

A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Ephesians

BROTHERS AND SISTERS: God, who is rich in mercy, because of the great love he had for us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, brought us to life with Christ—by grace you have been saved—raised us up with him, and seated us with him in the heavens in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not from you; it is the gift of God; it is not from works, so no one may boast. For we are his handiwork, created in Christ Jesus for the good works that God has prepared in advance, that we should live in them.

— The word of the Lord.

All — Thanks be to God.

Verse before the Gospel

(Jn 3:16) *(Stand)*

All — God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so everyone who believes in him might have eternal life.

Gospel (Jn 3:14–21)

P — A reading from the holy Gospel according to John.

All — Glory to you, O Lord.

JESUS said to Nicodemus: “Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, so that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.”

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world

to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him will not be condemned, but whoever does not believe has already been condemned, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the verdict, that the light came into the world, but people preferred darkness to light, because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come toward the light, so that his works might not be exposed. But whoever lives the truth comes to the light, so that his works may be clearly seen as done in God.

— The Gospel of the Lord.

All — Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Homily (*Sit*)

Profession of Faith (*Stand*)

All — I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried; he descended into hell; on the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty; from there he will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen.

Prayer of the Faithful

P — The cross of Jesus reminds us not only of our sinfulness but also of God's infinite love and mercy. With full confidence we acknowledge our weakness as we say:

R — Merciful Lord, listen to your people.

C — May the Church remain a living sign of God's love and mercy in times of darkness and despair. We pray: **(R)**

C — May our government and civil leaders strive to live by God's truth and walk in God's light, forsaking the culture of death and corruption. We pray: **(R)**

C — May we become more aware that sin not only offends God but also wounds us and our community. May we have frequent recourse through the sacrament of Penance that reconciles us to God and to one another. We pray: **(R)**

C — May the Lord wash away our hatred, banish violence and terrorism from our midst, and restore tranquility and justice. We pray: **(R)**

C — May the sick, the elderly, and the suffering realize from our care and attention that they are loved by God. We pray: **(R)**

C — Let us pray for the urgent concerns of our community and our personal intentions (*pause*). We pray: **(R)**

P — Heavenly Father, make us witness to the spirit of the cross by becoming beacons of peace and hope for our brothers and sisters.

This we ask through Christ our Lord.

All — Amen.



Presentation of the Gifts (*Stand*)

P — Pray, brethren...

All — May the Lord accept the sacrifice at your hands for the praise and glory of his name, for our good and the good of all his holy Church.

Prayer over the Offerings

P — We place before you with joy these offerings, which bring eternal remedy, O Lord, praying that we may both faithfully revere them and present them to you, as is fitting, for the salvation of all the world.

Through Christ our Lord.
All — Amen.

Preface II of Lent

P — The Lord be with you.
All — And with your spirit.

P — Lift up your hearts.
All — We lift them up to the Lord.

P — Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

All — It is right and just.

P — It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation, always and everywhere to give you thanks, Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God.

For you have given your children a sacred time for the renewing and purifying of their hearts, that, freed from disordered affections, they may so deal with the things of this passing world as to hold rather to the things that eternally endure.

And so, with all the Angels and Saints, we praise you, as without end we acclaim:

All — Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of hosts. Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest. (Kneel)

Acclamation (Stand)

All — We proclaim your Death, O Lord, and profess your Resurrection until you come again.

THE COMMUNION RITE

The Lord's Prayer

All — Our Father...

P — Deliver us, Lord...

All — For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours now and forever.



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Invitation to Peace

Invitation to Communion

(Kneel)

P — Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

All — Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.

Communion Antiphon

(Cf. Ps 122 [121]: 3-4)

Jerusalem is built as a city bonded as one together. It is there that the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, to praise the name of the Lord.

Prayer after Communion

(Stand)

P — Let us pray. *(Pause)*

O God, who enlighten everyone who comes into this world, illuminate our hearts, we pray, with the splendor of your grace, that we may always ponder what is worthy and pleasing to your majesty and love you in all sincerity.

Through Christ our Lord.
All — Amen.

THE CONCLUDING RITES

P — The Lord be with you.
All — And with your spirit.

Solemn Blessing

P — Bow down for the blessing.
(Pause)

Look upon those who call to you, O Lord, and sustain the weak; give life by your unfailing light to those who walk in the shadow of death, and bring those rescued by your mercy from every evil to reach the highest good.

Through Christ our Lord.
All — Amen.

P — And may the blessing of almighty God, the Father, and the Son, (†) and the Holy Spirit, come down on you and remain with you for ever.
All — Amen.

Dismissal

P — Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life.
All — Thanks be to God.

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