



The Holy See

**MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS
POPE JOHN PAUL II
FOR THE WORLD MISSION DAY 1994**

"Whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother, and sister, and mother" (Mt 12:50).

Dear Brothers and Sisters!

1. The Church, sent into the whole world to proclaim Christ's Gospel, has dedicated the year 1994 to the family, praying for and with the family, and reflecting on the problems concerning the family. In this annual Message for World Mission Day, I wish also to refer to this theme, aware as I am of the close connection that exists between the Church's mission and the family.

Christ himself chose a human family as the place for his Incarnation and preparation for the mission entrusted to him by the heavenly Father. Furthermore, he founded a new family, the Church, as a continuation of his universal saving action. Church and family, therefore, in view of Christ's mission, have mutual bonds and converging purposes. If all Christians share responsibility for the missionary activity that constitutes the ecclesial family to which, by God's grace, we all belong (cf. *Redemptoris missio*, n. 77), then the Christian family, based on a special sacrament, must feel all the more impelled by the missionary spirit.

2. Christ's love, which consecrates the marriage covenant, is that unquenchable flame which fires evangelization. Every member of the family, in unison with the Heart of the Redeemer, is invited to work for all men and women of the world and "to show concern for those both far and near" (*Redemptoris missio*, n. 77).

It is this love which inspires missionaries to proclaim zealously and perseveringly the Good News *ad gentes*, bearing witness to it with the gift of self, at times even with the supreme sign of martyrdom. The missionary's sole aim is to proclaim the Gospel in order to build up a community which becomes an extension of the family of Jesus Christ and is leaven for the growth of God's

Kingdom and the promotion of the highest human values (cf. *Redemptoris missio*, n. 34). Working through Christ and with Christ, the missionary labours for a justice, a peace and a development that are not ideological but real, thus helping to build the civilization of love.

By Christian marriage couples are witnesses of Christ

3. The Second Vatican Council strongly reaffirmed the concept — dear to the tradition of the Church Fathers — that the Christian family, constituted by sacramental grace, reflects the mystery of the Church in the domestic aspect (cf. *Lumen gentium*, n. 11). The Blessed Trinity dwells within the faithful family, which, by virtue of the Spirit, participates in the entire Church's concern for missionary activity by contributing to missionary encouragement and co-operation.

It is appropriate to underscore that the two patron saints of the missions, as many Gospel workers, had the joy of living their childhood in a truly Christian family. St Francis Xavier reflected in his missionary life the generosity, loyalty and deep religious spirit which he experienced in his family and especially alongside his mother. St Teresa of the Child Jesus, for her part, writes with characteristic simplicity: "All my life long the Good Lord has surrounded me with love: my earliest memories are filled with the most tender caresses and smiles!" (*The Story of a Soul*, manuscript A, f. 4v).

The family shares in the Church's life and mission in a threefold evangelizing activity: within itself, within the community to which it belongs and within the universal Church. In fact the sacrament of matrimony "makes Christian married couples and parents witnesses of Christ 'to the ends of the earth', missionaries, in the true and proper sense, of love and life" (*Familiaris consortio*, n. 54).

4. The family is missionary first of all by means of prayer and sacrifice. Like all Christian prayer, family prayer must also include the missionary dimension and in this way be efficacious for evangelization. This is why missionaries, according to Gospel logic, are aware of the need to ask constantly for prayers and sacrifices as a valuable support for their evangelizing work.

Prayer in a missionary spirit has various aspects, pre-eminent among which is contemplation of God's action, saving us through Jesus Christ. Thus prayer becomes heartfelt gratitude for the evangelization that has already reached us and that continues to spread throughout the world; at the same time it is a supplication to the Lord to make us docile instruments of his will, granting us the moral and material means necessary for building up his kingdom.

Sacrifice is the inseparable complement to prayer and is all the more effective if generous. Of inestimable value is the suffering of the innocent, the infirm, the sick, those subjected to oppression and violence, in other words, those united in a special manner on the way of the Cross with Jesus, Redeemer of every man and of the whole man.

Do not be afraid to commit yourselves to Christ's Gospel

5. The opinions and events, problems and conflicts, successes and failures of the whole world, thanks to the persuasive action of the social communications media, have considerable influence on families. Parents then fulfil their specific role when, together with their children, they comment on news, information and opinions, reflecting responsibly on what the media brings into their homes and also taking concrete action.

In this way the family corresponds to the proper function of social communications, which consists in promoting the communion and development of the human family (cf. *Communio et progressio*, n. 1; *Aetatis novae*, nn. 6-11). This objective cannot fail to be shared by every apostle of the Gospel and pursued in the light of faith, in view of the civilization of love.

However, action in the sensitive and complex field of the media calls for considerable input of human abilities and economic means. I thank all those who work generously so that, amid the countless messages which travel the world, the gentle but firm voice of the one who announces Christ, the salvation and hope of every human being, may be heard.

6. The highest expression of generosity is the total gift of self. On the occasion of World Mission Day, I cannot fail to address young people in a special way. Beloved! The Lord has given you a heart open to the widest horizons: do not be afraid to commit your life completely to the service of Christ and his Gospel! Listen to him as he says again today: "The harvest is abundant, but the labourers are few" (Lk 10:2).

I address parents as well. May faith and readiness never be lacking in your hearts, if the Lord should bless you by calling a son or a daughter to missionary service. May you give thanks to God! Indeed, see that this call is prepared through family prayer, through education rich in spirit and enthusiasm, through the daily example of care for others, through participation in parochial and diocesan activities, through involvement in associations and volunteer work.

The family that cultivates a missionary spirit in its lifestyle and in education itself, prepares good soil for the seed of the divine call and, at the same time, strengthens the loving ties and Christian virtues of its members.

7. Through Mary most holy, Mother of the Church, and St Joseph, her husband, invoked with confidence by all Christian families, may the missionary spirit in every domestic community grow during this year so that the whole of humanity may become "in Christ, the family of the children of God" (*Gaudium et spes*, n. 92).

With this prayer, I invoke upon missionaries all over the world and also on every Christian family, but especially on those involved in proclaiming the Gospel, the gifts of the divine Spirit, in pledge

of which I impart to all my Apostolic Blessing.

From the Vatican, 22 May, the Solemnity of Pentecost, 1994, the sixteenth year of my Pontificate.

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