MISSION WITHIN

By Sandeep;

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Good evening dear fathers and brothers, I am glad to stand before you and share with you some of my reflections on mission.

From an early age itself St. Therese of Lisieux had a great desire to go to the missions. In her autobiography, The Story of a Soul, She writes. “It happened in the Cathedral of Lisieux. One Sunday, looking at a picture of Our Lord on the Cross, she was struck by the blood flowing from one of the divine hands. She felt a great pang of sorrow when thinking this blood was falling to the ground without anyone’s hastening to gather it up. She was resolved to remain in spirit at the foot of the Cross and to receive the divine dew. She understood Jesus was then to pour it out upon souls… He wanted to give this to her Beloved to drink and Theresa felt with herself a great thirst for souls of the great sinners.”The physical life of St.Therese on earth was anchored to the cloister but her missionary heart was burning with zeal for souls. It was already in the mission fields and distant lands. On September 8, 1890, she petitioned Jesus: “That I save many souls . . .” Toward the end of her life (19.03.1897) she will add that she wants to “even save souls after my death.” Therefore, St. Therese of Lisieux was declared as the patroness of the missions by Pope Pius XI in 1927.

The Little Flower once said “Charity is the most excellent way that leads to God. I understood that the Church has a Heart and that this Heart is burning with love; for the fundamental vocation of every human being is self giving which is Love itself.” How could a person who never even left the cloister come to be known as the Patroness of the Missions? Can one be a missionary for souls without ever leaving home and even during this time of pandemic? As we inaugurate our missionary sodality this is the question that each one of us should ask and ponder over it.

St Therese a spiritual master of the contemplative life states that, “Our vocation is not going to reap in the fields of the mature crops; Jesus doesn’t tell us: ‘Lower your eyes look at the fields and go and reap’. Our mission is more sublime still. Here are Jesus’ words: ‘Lift your eyes and see. See how in heaven there are empty places, he asks you to fill them. You are my praying Moses on the mountain; request workers of me, and I will send them. I only wait for a prayer, a sigh of your heart! The apostolate of prayer, is not so higher than that of preaching? Our mission is one of forming evangelical workers that will save millions of souls whose mothers we will be.” Forby baptism we are all called to be missionaries.

Never can we forget that the root and the strength of we being missionaries comes from being faithful disciples and committed religious. First of all, we are missionaries of humanity who share our lives with the people who welcome us.  We are missionaries to serve, no matter what the circumstances or the situations we are in.  We give food to the hungry and drink to the thirsty because it is good to do so, no matter what the consequences we may face on our way.

Because we are missionaries of humanity, we are invited also to be missionaries of mercy and of fraternity.  Today the entire world is suffering everywhere. We find wars, divisions, extreme poverty, refugees, the hungry, the ill, the abandoned and the devastation of the COVID 19.  But we must bring a message of peace, of development, of pardon, of fraternity and of hope - not only as a discourse, but in our own lives, in this way we will be able to live our daily life well as true witnesses to Christ’s love. There can be no Salesian "neutrality" in the face of the sufferings of the people or before the situations of suffering and of lack of every kind. We must respond as quickly as possible, seeking to accompany the people in their life; for every community by its nature itself is called to be a missionary.

To be a Salesian missionary today means to have one's eyes and hearts for those who are “the last” and the “little ones”.  Saint John Paul II on many occasions has said “man needs to contemplate the face of Christ.” The face is intimate and encompasses much of our senses; it is how we know others. We see with our eyes and discern a smile as a sign of emotions. I advise you with all my heart that you: have your eyes open wide to see the people and to look them straight in the eye; have your hearts and your arms open to receive them; and have the courage to give your entire life to them.

Mary was an incredibly sensitive woman and she paid close attention to Jesus’ every word and action. If she had not said, “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word,” Luke 1:38, her understanding and strength of acceptance of the truth may not have been made possible.  Through faith Mary continued to hear and ponder on that word, thus in a sense Mary our Mother became the first “disciple” – the first Missionary of her Son.  She became the first to whom He seemed to say, “Follow me!”

Mary’s faith and example is a model for all Missionaries throughout the world and for each and every one of us.  She not only shows the need for prayer, as she consistently “ponders” what she saw and experienced throughout the life of her beloved Son, Jesus, but also reached out to others in service. May Mary, our Teacher and our Help, the Mother of Mercy, whom we venerate this month especially, accompany us every day and in every step we take. Let us learn from Her to be attentive to the needs of poor and the abandoned people, and of the poorest boys, girls, and young people whom, I am sure, we carry in our hearts.  Learn from Her to praise God for the wonders that He does in every corner of the earth, in every culture, and in every nation.

Thank you