

# ALONE WITH OUR LORD

*A Meditation on*

*Our Universal Call to Mission*

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The Society for  
**THE PROPAGATION OF THE FAITH**

*...all of us committed to the  
worldwide mission of Jesus*

## Our Lord Welcomes You

We are invited to pray as members of the universal Church, aware of our many brothers and sisters at prayer in far-off places such as Kenya,



China, Bolivia, India and the islands of the Pacific. In our hearts, we say to them, **“Peace be with you!”**; their message to us is the same: **“Peace be with you!”**

**“Peace be with you!”** These are the words of the risen Lord greeting his disciples before showing them his hands and his side (John 20:19-20).

**“Peace be with you!”** Jesus repeats the same greeting before sending his disciples on mission: **“As the Father has sent me, so I send you”** (John 21:21).

**“Peace be with you!”** Our Lord greets us in the same way in the liturgy of the Mass. Outside of Mass, while in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament, his greeting continues to echo, and we rejoice in the gift of a peace that he alone can give.

Before beginning our prayer, we do well to focus our attention on Christ’s gift of peace. We welcomed that gift in baptism. We have been nourished by it in the Eucharist. Now we pause to reflect on it as we prepare to pray on themes inspired by *To the Ends of the Earth*, a Pastoral Statement on World Mission by the Catholic Bishops of the United States. Christ’s peace is not for us alone. It is for us to proclaim and to share with all human beings.

## Opening Prayer

After being welcomed and greeted by Our Lord, it is time for us to respond. We do so with a formal prayer. It is important to address God directly.

*Almighty Father, Father of Jesus, the first missionary, you sent your Son as the Word made flesh to bring your life to the world and to be the light of all nations.*

*Almighty Father, Father of all missionaries, every Christian is Christ's witness. As a member of his Church, I continue the mission of your Son under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. May my voice join with those of my fellow Christians in proclamation of your goodness and the good news of salvation to the ends of the earth.*

*Almighty Father, Father of all who have Christ's mission at heart, I may not be able to join the Church's missionaries among other peoples, but like St. Therese of Lisieux, whose health prevented her from fulfilling her missionary dreams, my prayer for world mission is important. It makes me a missionary, through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

## A Meditative Litany

We now continue to pray with the following meditative litany, pausing in silence after each expression of thanksgiving, praise and petition.

*Thank you, loving and gracious God, for your Son Jesus Christ, and for the knowledge, faith and immortality he reveals.*

*Thank you, loving and gracious God, for the cross of Christ, by which I am redeemed.*

*Thank you, loving and gracious God, for sending me your Spirit, whose power and gifts are at work in me.*

*Thank you, loving and gracious God, for the Church; from the ends of the earth gather all nations into your kingdom.*

*Thank you, loving and gracious God, for the Gospel of salvation; may I be its witness both in word and in deed.*

## First Scriptural Reading



*Thank you, loving and gracious God, for the table of the Eucharist, and for the risen Lord's presence and ministry among us; may the bread of life sustain me unto eternal life.*

*Thank you, loving and gracious God, for the variety and goodness of the world's cultures and peoples; may the human family be of one heart and one mind.*

*Thank you, loving and gracious God, for allowing me to join the mission of your Son at my baptism; may my words and actions proclaim you as Lord to all I meet.*

In our prayer, we now turn to the Scriptures, to the text of Mark 6:34-44. But before reading the passage itself, we need to prepare.

The reading tells the story of one of the great signs and wonders in the ministry of Jesus. The story, variously called "the feeding of the multitudes," "the miracle of the loaves and fish," or "the multiplication of loaves," shows Jesus' disciples overwhelmed by having to feed so many people. Christ's mission was too much for them. But following them step by step, we soon join them in realizing that all they needed to do was share the little they had for all to be wonderfully nourished. As the story begins, Jesus arrives at a deserted place with his disciples and is moved with compassion for an enormous crowd, because they are like sheep without a shepherd.

**When he disembarked and saw the vast crowd, his heart was moved with pity for them, for they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things. By now it was already late and his disciples approached him and said, "This is a deserted place and it is already very late. Dismiss them so that they can go to the surrounding farms and villages and buy themselves something to eat." He said to them in reply, "Give them some food yourselves." But they said to him, "Are we to buy two hundred days' wages worth of food and give it to them to eat?" He asked them, "How many loaves do you have? Go and see." And when they had found out they said, "Five loaves**

and two fish." So he gave orders to have them sit down in groups on the green grass. The people took their places in rows by hundreds and by fifties. Then, taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he said the blessing, broke the loaves, and gave them to [his] disciples to set before the people; he also divided the two fish among them all. They all ate and were satisfied. And they picked up twelve wicker baskets full of fragments and what was left of the fish. Those who ate [of the loaves] were five thousand men. *(Mark 6:34-44)*

### **Meditation on the Reading**

Christian mission is an integral part of discipleship. It flows from our baptism in Christ and from the dynamic outpouring of the Spirit in confirmation, which places us in a missionary community. The Eucharist seals our commitment to join Christ in his saving mission to the ends of the earth. The connection between Christian life and Christian mission is beautifully expressed in the ancient tradition of the multiplication of the loaves, which conveys an important message for our missionary Church.

In Mark's account of the miracle, we are struck by the contrast between Jesus' instant compassion at seeing the crowd and the reaction of his disciples, who asked him to send the people away. Jesus saw that the people were like sheep without a shepherd, and he proceeded to teach them. He became a shepherd for them. When the disciples suggested that Jesus dismiss the crowd that they might go elsewhere to buy food, he told his followers that they must feed the people, even if all they could find was a meager five loaves and two fish! They too must be shepherds.

Jesus here teaches us something about the Eucharist, where the bread of our poor humanity becomes a rich banquet for divine life.

Like the disciples who gathered in small communities, we too must share Christ as nourishment for others. Such is the Christian mission. Our sharing begins with other parishes and dioceses but reaches out to every land, gathering all peoples at the table of the Lord, that none will ever again be like sheep without a shepherd.

Every Christian throughout the world is called to be a missionary. As soon as the seed of the Gospel is planted and the Church is established on new soil, Christ calls that local church to



share the Gospel with others.

Like the disciples, we must be ready, therefore, to share with others as well as to receive what they have to offer. The voice of Christ speaks to others through us, and it speaks to us through others, even those of

vastly different background or culture.

In the simple act of sharing, we join others in their joys and suffering, and accompany them on their life's journey. By sharing the Gospel of salvation and the bread of life, we accompany one another on our Christian journey to God.

Jesus still looks over the crowd and sees a people hungry for the word of God, the waters of grace, the anointing of the Spirit, and the bread of life. His heart is moved with compassion for them, for they are like sheep without a shepherd.

Some of us are called to bring the Gospel to other nations; others are called to remain at home and to pray, work and sacrifice for the world mission of the Church.

When we listen to the Gospel and celebrate Eucharist, we experience Christ present among us, inviting us to new life and giving us the Spirit who transforms us into missionaries.

His heart is moved with compassion for the needy and hungry of our world, for they are like sheep without a shepherd.

*I pledge, therefore, to be his missionary, here, today, where I live and where I work.*

## Second Scriptural Reading

Again we turn to the Scriptures, this time to Mark 10:35-40, and as earlier we need to prepare.

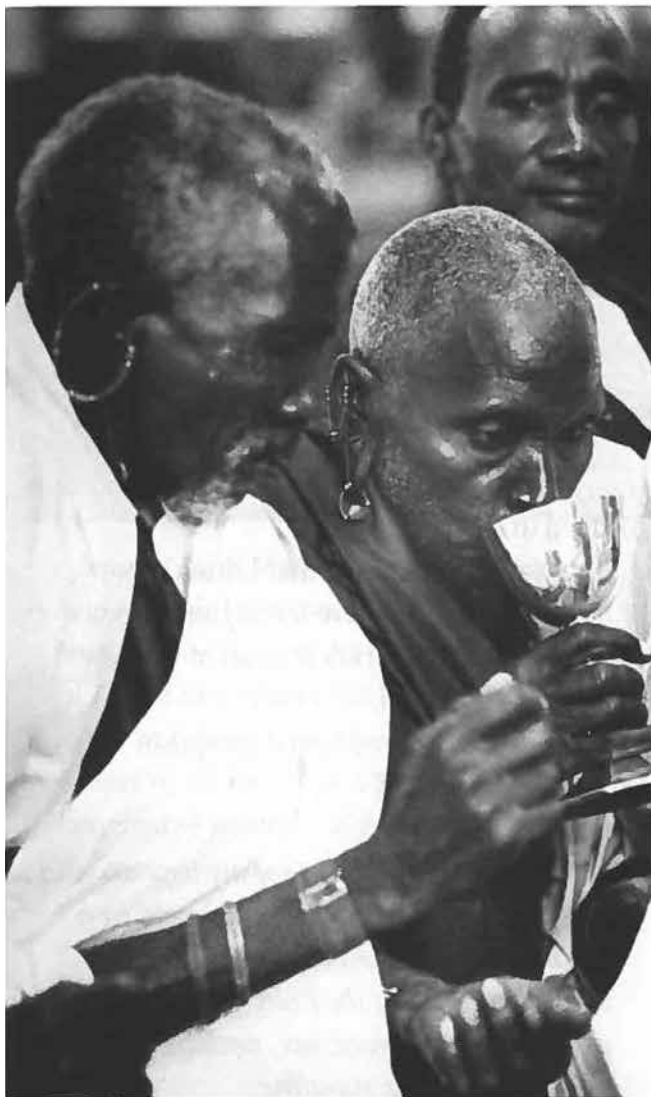
Our second reading tells of a brief exchange between Jesus and two disciples, James and John, the sons of Zebedee. This dialogue summarizes Jesus' entire teaching on the cost of missionary discipleship in terms of baptism and Eucharist.

Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him and said to him, "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you," He replied, "What do you wish [me] to do for you?" They answered him, "Grant that in your glory we may sit one at your right and the other at your left." Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you are asking. Can you drink the cup that I drink or be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?" They said to him, "We can." Jesus said to them, "The cup that I drink, you will drink, and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized; but to sit at my right or at my left is not mine to give but is for those for whom it has been prepared." (*Mark 10:35-40*)

### Meditation on the Reading

We find it easy to share with those we know and love, but sharing with people we do not know simply because they too are God's children can be very difficult. Before the multiplication of the loaves, Jesus' disciples had protested that sharing

with all would be costly. They were thinking in material terms. Financial sacrifice, however, is little compared to the true cost of missionary discipleship, which demands that we give ourselves.



## Closing Prayer

That is what we pledge in baptism and Eucharist. To be able to share in Christ's glory, we join the disciples in their willingness to be baptized in the Lord's passion and to drink his cup of suffering.

We do not do this alone, but in union with Christians all over the world. Together we commit ourselves to the new covenant and to new relationships, transcending every consideration of race, sex, family, nationality and social or economic standing.

Jesus said to his disciples: "Can you drink the cup that I drink or be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?"

Sometimes the giving of self may mean the shedding of blood, but for us it means daily dedication, a sharing that requires dying with Christ as we pledged to do in baptism.

"Can you drink the cup that I drink?"

Inspired by Christ's love for all humanity, we commit ourselves to drink the cup of the new covenant in his blood.

"Can you be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?"

*I reaffirm, now, the grace of my baptism and join Christians throughout the world in a common commitment to new relationships, which gather us at the Lord's table without consideration for race, sex, nationality and social or economic standing.*

As we conclude our prayer, once again we pray to God directly.

*Almighty Lord, Father of Jesus, your first missionary, you poured out your Spirit on the first disciples, empowering them to preach the Gospel to all nations.*



*Almighty Lord, Father of all missionaries, help me to be a missionary in spirit and in truth. Give me and my brothers and sisters in Christ throughout the world your Spirit today so that we may sow the truth of the Gospel in all hearts and proclaim your kingdom of justice and peace to the ends of the earth. Such is my prayer through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*



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*A Pastoral Statement on World Mission*

By the Catholic Bishops of the United States

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