

## 29th Sunday in Ordinary Time

The world needs our prayers. Russia's war on Ukraine persists with great loss of human life, property and hope. Hamas caused the greatest loss of Jewish life in a single day since the Holocaust. The climate of the earth is changing. Our representatives in Congress struggle to find a leader for the House. Everyone wants peace and good leadership, but we scramble to attain these essential goals. The Catholic Church holds out a vision for unity. Yet even within our own congregations we often experience discord.

The Vatican Synod on Synodality is taking a long view on the Church and its mission. Pope Francis has authorized a process in which he says the protagonist is the Holy Spirit. All the meetings begin with prayer. Participants at round tables express their views uninterrupted by others. They pray again before discussion happens. The synod is modeling a process of listening not just to an opposing viewpoint but to the whisperings of the Holy Spirit.

Today the Church worldwide observes Mission Sunday, in which a second collection fosters the spread of the gospel to the corners of the world. This year's theme is "Hearts on fire, feet on the move," based on the account of the disciples who met Jesus on the road to Emmaus right after the resurrection. Pope Francis invites us to "set out to make other hearts burn with the word of God, to open the eyes of others to Jesus in the Eucharist, and to invite everyone to walk together on the path of peace and salvation that God, in Christ, has bestowed upon all humanity." Mission Sunday reminds us that the Church is missionary by nature. All of us are called to share the Good News especially in a quarreling world.

The responsorial we sing at today's Mass joins this expansive theme. The refrain seems to invite a simple exercise: "Give the Lord glory and honor." But within the psalm, those words are addressed not to you and me, but to all the world. Psalm 96 opens with these words: "Sing to the Lord, all the earth. Tell among the nations his glory." The psalm continues, "Give the Lord, you families of peoples, give the Lord glory and power; give the Lord the glory of his name."

We use it today because of Jesus' famous command about civic responsibility: "Repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God," but also because the first reading explains how Cyrus, a pagan ruler, set Israel free from exile. The Lord motivated him even though Cyrus didn't know it. The Lord said, "I have called you by your name, giving you a title, though you knew me not.... It is I who arm you, though you know me not.... I am the Lord, there is no other."

Pope Francis has set this Friday aside for fasting and prayer, a day, he says, "of penance to which I invite sisters and brothers of the various Christian denominations, those belonging to other religions, and all those who have at heart the cause of peace in the world, to join in as they see fit." We will have exposition of the Blessed Sacrament after the 12:15 Mass and Benediction at 2 for those who wish to join us. At times it feels that there's nothing we can do to stop the wars and contempt that rage around the world. But there is. God can touch the hearts of those who don't even know about him. With hearts on fire, we can ask God to act. He is the Lord of all nations. There is no other.