

30th Sunday C Ordinary Time Mission Sunday 10-24-10

Got a question to begin today. How many of you are converts to the Catholic faith, or in the process of that? Please raise your hand, nice and high. And how many of you had a parent who was a convert to our faith? Please raise your hand. Thanks.

Somebody inspired you to become Catholic, I'm guessing. Someone influenced your parent. The fact is, all of us at some point had an ancestor who listened to the Gospel, or saw the Gospel in action. And that great-great-great grandparent said, "I believe. I want to be baptized." Generations later, here we are today: Catholic believers, Christian people, on our way to heaven. I for one thank God for whoever it was who helped my ancestors to believe and to pray.

Today is World Mission Sunday. The offering of every parish in the world is sent to the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, which disperses the monies in 1150 mission dioceses throughout the world. For example, our friends the Comboni missionaries will receive funds for their witness in the Sudan, Chad, and Uganda.

Of course, the entire US was once mission territory; the first collection by the Society for the Propagation of the Faith was in 1822. Two-thirds of that offering was sent to the eastern United States to support missionaries; perhaps those missionaries are why we are here today. In 1833, the US began contributing to missionary outreach; our gift to the Society that year was all of \$6.00. Our dollars today may help someone else to believe.

And now a few words about today's scriptures: A rabbi once asked himself this question, "Why is it that God often appeared to people in the olden days, but in our time nobody ever sees him?" The rabbi answered, "Nowadays there is no one who can bow low enough."

Sunday Mass works for us when we can bow low, like the tax collector—when we recognize our need for God. When we are in touch with our own woundedness, our brokenness....then we are ready for grace. Then we are ready for a Savior, for Jesus. That is why Mass begins with "Lord, have mercy!" Because Christ can do nothing with a smug, self-satisfied person--like the Pharisee.

Notice how the Pharisee compares himself to the tax collector. It is so easy to look down on other people, so easy to judge, as if God put us in charge. There is always someone we can find to look down, to feel superior to—and then we do not have to look at our own hearts.

So, if you struggle, as I often do. If you fall short of your values, as I do. If you fail, as I do—then we at least do not judge others, and we are truly open to Jesus' forgiveness and grace.

