

Fire On The Earth

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CARITAS - VERITAS

Jesus said: "I have come to bring fire to the earth, and how I wish it were blazing already!" (Luke 12:49)

Theme: "Go into the whole world and preach the Gospel"

A) The General Situation

For a Catholic, unless the hungry are fed, the naked clothed, and the Gospel preached to the ends of the earth life is, in a sense, meaningless. With Christ we must be able to say "for this I was born, for this came I into the world, to bear witness to the truth", - the truth about what is really to be valued, the reasons for living and the reasons for dying. We are called to be the light of the world and the salt of the earth. It is by how well we carry out this task we will be judged. It is not those who call Christ "Lord, Lord" who will enter the Kingdom of Heaven but only those who do the Will of the Father. The Will of the Father is this: that all things should be brought under Christ as Head.

The means are these:

- (1) by the preaching of the Gospel to every creature
- (2) by extending the kingdom of Love on earth by the feeding of the hungry and the clothing of the naked
- (3) by giving glory to God through prayer and praise.

The carrying out of this task is given to the Mystical Body of Christ on earth - the Church. But note this. We are the Church. The responsibility of carrying out this task is ours. This is one of the main reasons for which we were given the gift of Faith. By the very fact of our Baptism and Confirmation we know with certainty that God has called us to take some part in this task.

B) The specific tasks of the various parts of the Mystical Body

For married people this usually means:

- (1) prayer to obtain the grace of conversion for others
- (2) fostering a zeal for the conversion of souls in their own hearts and their children's hearts
- (3) by taking an active part in the lay apostolate
- (4) by giving all possible financial support to missionary activity at home and abroad

(5) by sharing one's resources with other families and forming Catholic communities, which will develop and give witness to brotherly love, Christian sharing, and a living faith.

For single people this usually means:

- (1) prayer
- (2) seeking God's will as to their future role in the mission of the Church (Are you called to marriage? the Priesthood? religious life? the single life? etc.)
- (3) a good religious training
- (4) some means of Christian witness
- (5) financial support

For priests and religious this usually means:

- (1) their own special apostolate (Priests: preaching, the Sacraments, etc.; Religious: teaching, nursing, etc.)
- (2) prayer for the conversion of souls
- (3) fostering a hunger for souls in themselves and in others
- (4) an open-minded and encouraging attitude to all legitimate expressions of the apostolic spirit
- (5) the raising of material support for missionary and apostolic activities
- (6) being available for counselling, etc.

For the sick and suffering this usually means:

- (1) the offering up of their cross in a Christian spirit to obtain grace for the salvation of souls
- (2) any other help they are able to give

Finally it is important for us to realize that we have limitations and that the developing of an apostolic spirit takes time and patience. However, a goal cannot be reached until it is known, and a goal that demands effort and sacrifice will be given up unless its value is realized.

For those who would like to study the official position we have included the following quotes. They are on:

The teaching of the Church on the preaching of the Gospel

(Taken from the teachings of the Catholic Bishops of the World, Meeting in Rome during the Second Vatican Council 1963-1965)

WE HAVE THE DUTY TO PROCLAIM VIGOROUSLY; BUT METHODS ARE TO BE KEPT IN KEEPING WITH HUMAN DIGNITY.

"...let the Christians walk in wisdom in the face of those outside, 'in the Holy Spirit, in unaffected love, in the word of truth' (2 Cor 6:6-7). Let them be about their task of spreading the light of life with all confidence and apostolic courage, even to the shedding of their blood.

"The disciple is bound by a grave obligation towards Christ his Master ever more adequately to understand the truth received from Him, faithfully to proclaim it, and vigorously to defend it, never,

- be it understood - having recourse to means that are incompatible with the spirit of the Gospel. At the same time the charity of Christ urges him to act lovingly, prudently and patiently in his dealings with those who are in error or in ignorance with regard to the faith." (Dignitatis Humanae - Religious Liberty, n 14)

BEFORE MEN CAN COME TO MASS AND WORSHIP, THEY MUST BE CALLED TO FAITH

"Before men can come to the liturgy they must be called to faith and to conversion: 'How then are they to call upon Him in whom they have not believed? But how are they to believe Him whom they have not heard? And how are they to hear if no one preaches? And how are men to preach unless they be sent?' (Rom. 10:14)

"Therefore the Church announces the good tidings of salvation to those who do not believe, so that all men may know the one true God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent, and may repent and amend their ways (cf. Jn 17:3, Lk 24:27, Acts 2:38)." (Sacrosanctum Concilium - Sacred Liturgy, n 9)

SPECIAL URGENCY TO PREACH THE GOSPEL NOW

"The conditions of this age lend special urgency to the Church's task of bringing all men to full union with Christ, since mankind today is joined together more closely than ever before by social, technical and cultural bonds." (Lumen Gentium - The Church, n 1)

THE RIGHT TO PREACH THE GOSPEL, AND THE DUTY, COMES TO ALL DIRECTLY FROM GOD

"...the duty has weighed on the Church to spread the faith and the saving work of Christ. This duty exists not only in virtue of the express command which was inherited from the Apostles by the order of Bishops, assisted by the priests and united with the successor of Peter and supreme shepherd of the Church. It exists also in virtue of that life which flows from Christ into His members: 'From Him the whole body (being closely joined and knit together through every joint of the system according to the functioning in due measure of every single part) derives its increase to the building up of itself in love' (Eph. 4:16)." (Ad Gentes - Missionary Activity, n 5)

THROUGH THE INTERCESSION OF MARY, QUEEN OF APOSTLES

"These fathers and the Roman Pontiff are afire with the same love with which Christ burned towards men. But knowing that it is God who makes His kingdom come on earth, they pour forth their prayers together with all the Christian faithful, that through the intercession of Mary, Queen of the Apostles, the nations may be led to the knowledge of the truth as soon as possible (1 Tim 2:4), and that the splendour of God which brightens the face of Jesus Christ may shine upon all men through the Holy Spirit (2 Cor 4:6)." (Ad Gentes - Missionary Activity, n 42)

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