



Allocutio



Presentata Curia 28th October 2010

Allocutio: The Missions: Christ in and through me towards the world

In this month of the missions it is worth reflecting on something that is deep in the spirituality of the Legion of Mary and that is that our first object is our own holiness. There is one thing that is absolutely certain: there is no point in talking about the missions unless I am bringing Christ to myself first. I am the biggest challenge to be confronted and conquered for Christ on the one hand but I am also potentially the biggest hope for Christ.

Or look on it another way: the greatest missionaries were people who first had to tackle themselves and overcome their resistance to Christ; it was by becoming totally dedicated to Our Lord that they became great missionaries. Here is yet another truth: the greatest obstacles to the Gospel being spread are those who speak about God but whose lives and dispositions give plenty of ammo to that spirit which promotes discouragement and disillusionment and disinterest. All the more reason to change myself.

I mention the many saints who first had to confront themselves. Paul, Augustine, Patrick, Ignatius of Loyola, Teresa of Avila, Therese of Lisieux to name but a few. Those last two might seem the odd men out. They both had religious upbringings, neither of them would appear to have gone seriously astray, they both became nuns. But each of them had a struggle with themselves. And it was in the battle with themselves, the confronting of their selfish ways, their mediocrity and their change of direction to follow Christ and imitate him as best they could that they found their vocations as witnesses to Christ.

Teresa of Avila whom we honoured in mid-October lived in a lax convent and she herself admits as a nun that she gave up praying and simply lived a poor standard enjoying earthly pleasures. But her life illustrates for us someone who answered a call to fight the laxity and she embarked on a courageous journey to know Christ in prayer. And from that she was given courage to confront what needed changing and revolutionised the world of Carmel.

Let me come to Therese who is also an October saint. It is in fact astonishing that this young girl with her psychological dispositions, living obscurely in the enclosure of Carmel in Lisieux, could end up the patron of the missions. There she focused on becoming a disciple of Christ. I wonder did she have any sense of what would happen on earth after her death? I suspect that when she used those words, "I will spend my heaven doing good on earth", she intended simply to continually pray before the throne of God for us. Perhaps I am wrong and I am open to correction on the point but I doubt if she or the others had a clue how the journal of her soul would become a world best-seller.

What her story illustrates for you and me is this, that when we decide ourselves to leave aside the nonsense and put our hearts on being disciples of Jesus and making his standards ours and when we are faithful to that journey and opt to live the best standards, then God takes that effort and uses it for the strengthening of other souls. And like Therese you may never know or sense the good you do or how God uses you.



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Is this not why the first objective of the Legion of Mary is the holiness of its own members. There is no doubt about the fact that all missionary work starts with me and so the first and crucial step in missionary activity is to change myself. It is always worth remembering that if I make myself a better person the world has to become a better place. Others speak about changing the world and getting things done out there somewhere. Completely useless and of no value if they have not first changed their own inner dispositions and attitudes! That is why so many worthy visions have been ruined by corruption.

I am not saying through all this that we look only into ourselves. Our Lord spoke of a lamp giving light and he definitely said, "Let your light so shine among men that they may see your good works and give glory to God". In fact giving a little thought to whether I am giving the light of Christ to others can help prevent us from turning totally inwards. What do people think when they think of me? Or what do they see and hear in my presence? Do my words and actions encourage them, give them hope, lift them up? Do they meet Christ? We do not ask these questions out of an immature worry about ourselves so as to seek our own glory but to spur us on for the glory of God.

We all need as Christians to address how we should talk and behave in our daily lives and the quality of witness we can give. If only we could aim each day to give our best for Christ and not for ourselves.

But we must not be on a solo run either. St. Paul has warned us that we are not the full body. We may not even be the full shilling! We know that it is the combined effort of everyone which helps build up God's Kingdom. And it is for that reason we should pray for the whole missionary effort of the Church and those who have dedicated themselves to it on a full time basis, especially those who are facing great obstacles. And it is also the reason we act as a body in the Legion, working together in an act of unity. Is not that the final witness of Our Lady to us as she prayed in union with the apostles coming up to Pentecost. Indeed a great sign of having found Christ is that we draw closer to one another as his brothers and sisters. Amen.

Fr Paul Churchill