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Holy Mass for World Missionary Day

At 10.00 this morning, 29th Sunday of Ordinary Time, in the Vatican Basilica, the Holy Father Francis celebrated Holy Mass on the occasion of World Missionary Day, in the context of the Extraordinary Missionary Month.

The following is the homily delivered by the Pope during the Eucharistic celebration:

Homily of the Holy Father

I would like to reflect on three words taken from the readings we have just heard: a noun, a verb and an adjective. The noun is *the mountain*: Isaiah speaks of it when he prophesies about a mountain of the Lord, raised above the hills, to which all the nations will flow (cf. *Is* 2:2). We see the image of the mountain again in the Gospel when Jesus, after his resurrection, tells his disciples to meet him on the mount of Galilee; the Galilee inhabited by many different peoples: "Galilee of the Gentiles" (cf. *Mt* 4:15). It seems, then, that the mountain is God's favourite place for encountering humanity. It is his meeting place with us, as we see in the Bible, beginning with Mount Sinai and Mount Carmel, all the way to Jesus, who proclaimed the Beatitudes on the mountain, was transfigured on Mount Tabor, gave his life on Mount Calvary and ascended to heaven from the Mount of Olives. The mountain, the place of great encounters between God and humanity, is also the place where Jesus spent several hours in prayer (cf. *Mk* 6:46) to unite heaven and earth, and to unite us, his brothers and sisters, with the Father.

What does the mountain say to us? We are called to draw near to God and to others. To God, the Most High, in silence and prayer, avoiding the rumours and gossip that diminish us. And to others, who, from the mountain, can be seen in a different perspective: that of God who calls all peoples. From on high, others are seen as a community whose harmonious beauty is discovered only in viewing them as a whole. The mountain reminds us that our brothers and sisters should not be selected but embraced, not only with our gaze but also with our entire life. The mountain unites God and our brothers and sisters in a single embrace, that of prayer. The mountain draws us up and away from the many transient things, and summons us to rediscover what is essential, what is lasting: God and our brothers and sisters. Mission begins on the mountain: there, we discover what really

counts. In the midst of this missionary month, let us ask ourselves: what really counts in my life? To what peaks do I want to ascend?

A verb accompanies the noun “mountain”: the verb *to go up*. Isaiah exhorts us: “Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord” (2:3). We were not born to remain on the ground, to be satisfied with ordinary things, we were born to reach the heights and there to meet God and our brothers and sisters. However, this means that we have to *go up*: to leave behind a horizontal life and to resist the force of gravity caused by our self-centredness, to make an exodus from our own ego. Going up requires great effort, but it is the only way to get a better view of everything. As mountain-climbers know, only when you arrive at the top can you get the most beautiful view; only then do you realize that you would not have that view were it not for that uphill path.

And as in the mountains we cannot climb well if we are weighed down by our packs, so in life we must rid ourselves of things that are useless. This is also the secret of mission: to go, you have to leave something behind, to *proclaim*, you must first *renounce*. A credible proclamation is not made with beautiful words, but by an exemplary life: a life of service that is capable of rejecting all those material things that shrink the heart and make people indifferent and inward-looking; a life that renounces the useless things that entangle the heart in order to find time for God and others. We can ask ourselves: how am I doing in my efforts to *go up*? Am I able to reject the heavy and useless baggage of worldliness in order to climb the mountain of the Lord? Is mine a journey upwards or one of worldliness?

If the *mountain* reminds us of what matters – God and our brothers and sisters – and the verb *to go up* tells us how to get there, a third word is even more important for today’s celebration. It is the adjective *all*, which constantly reappears in the readings we have heard: “*all* peoples”, says Isaiah (2:2); “*all* peoples”, we repeated in the Psalm; God desires “*all* to be saved”, writes Paul (1 *Tim* 2:4); “Go and make disciples of *all* nations”, says Jesus in the Gospel (*Mt* 28:19). The Lord is deliberate in repeating the word *all*. He knows that we are always using the words “my” and “our”: my things, our people, our community... But he constantly uses the word *all*. All, because no one is excluded from his heart, from his salvation; all, so that our heart can go beyond human boundaries and particularism based on a self-centredness that displeases God. All, because everyone is a precious treasure, and the meaning of life is found only in giving this treasure to others. Here is our mission: to go up the mountain to pray for everyone and to come down from the mountain to be a gift to all.

Going up and coming down: the Christian, therefore, is always on the move, outward-bound. *Go* is in fact the imperative of Jesus in the Gospel. We meet many people every day, but – we can ask – do we really encounter the people we meet? Do we accept the invitation of Jesus or simply go about our own business? Everyone expects things from others, but the Christian *goes* to others. Bearing witness to Jesus is never about getting accolades from others, but about loving those who do not even know the Lord. Those who bear witness to Jesus go out to all, not just to their own acquaintances or their little group. Jesus is also saying to you: “Go, don’t miss a chance to bear me witness!” My brother, my sister, the Lord expects from you a testimony that no one can give in your place. “May you come to realize what that word is, the message of Jesus that God wants to speak to the world by your life.... lest you fail in your precious mission.” (*Gaudete et Exsultate*, 24).

What instructions does the Lord give us for going forth to others? Only one, and very simple: *make disciples*. But, be careful: *his* disciples, not our own. The Church proclaims the Gospel well only if she lives the life of a disciple. And a disciple follows the Master daily and shares the joy of discipleship with others. Not by conquering, mandating, proselytizing, but by witnessing, humbling oneself alongside other disciples and offering with love the love that we ourselves received. This is our mission: to give pure and fresh air to those immersed in the pollution of our world; to bring to earth that peace which fills us with joy whenever we meet Jesus on the mountain in prayer; to show by our lives, and perhaps even by our words, that God loves everyone and never tires of anyone.

Dear brothers and sisters, each of us has and is “a mission on this earth” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 273). We are here to witness, bless, console, raise up, and radiate the beauty of Jesus. Have courage! Jesus expects so much from you! We can say that the Lord is “concerned” about those who do not yet know that they are beloved children of the Father, brothers and sisters for whom he gave his life and sent the Holy Spirit. Do you want to

quell Jesus' concern? Go and show love to everyone, because your life is a precious mission: it is not a burden to be borne, but a gift to offer. Have courage, and let us fearlessly go forth to all!
