

Franciscan Missionary Union
Toll Free: 1.888.372.6478
website: www.fmunion.org

135 West 31st St.
New York, New York 10001

November, 2010

Dear friend of the missions,

As the days get shorter, we know that the year is winding down. The Church begins this month with the Solemnity of All Saints on November 1. We remember our beloved deceased on All Souls Day on November 2. November 9 is the Dedication of St. John Lateran. It is a good time to pray for the Church. November 17 is the feast of St. Elizabeth of Hungary, a patron of the Secular Franciscans. November 21 is the Solemnity of Christ the King, the last Sunday of the Church Year. November 29 is the feast of All Saints of the Franciscan Order. It celebrates the holiness of the men and women who have followed the way of St. Francis. Election Day in November 2nd, take part in the voting process no matter what side you support. November 25 is Thanksgiving Day in the United States. We can never be thankful enough! Pray especially for those families that will not be able to be together on Thanksgiving Day, especially because their loved ones are serving in combat. Pray for peace! November 11 is Veterans Day, another good day to pray for peace and for those who are serving and have served in our armed forces. All of us are grateful to you for your kindness to the missions, and we pray for you every day. Especially during November, we will also remember your loved ones who are deceased. Advent begins on November 28. Enjoy the blessings of the month.

Go and tell all the world

Fr. Russell Becker, O.F.M.

As a suggestion for the Solemnity of Christ the King, this story was offered: A king was looking out the window of his castle and he saw something in the distance that was moving toward the castle slowly and without much balance. As it got closer, he realized it was one of his knights. He wondered what had happened and he went out to meet him. When got close, he saw that the knight was bruised and wounded. The king asked his: "Sir George, what happened to you, who did this to you? The knight replied: "Your Majesty, I have just come from defending your honor against your enemies on the western border!" The king replied, "But I have no enemies on the western border!" The knight replied to the king, "You do now, your Majesty, you do now!"

This story is a wonderful challenge to us all to reflect on how we evangelize, how we bring people to knowledge of God and proclaim the presence of the Kingdom of God. In these days there is such strident division among all peoples. The most peculiar is the division among Catholics. We divide ourselves and mistrust one another presuming those with whom we disagree get up every morning intending to destroy the Church and betray God. In fact some would even like the Church to be smaller and more intense, of course the only smaller Church they want is one that is made up of their side. If this is not bad enough, as these divisions are expressed to those outside the Church, we cease to evangelize and decide that we are to defend God against God's enemies. There may be people who think that God is their enemy, but there are no people that God thinks is God's enemy. God does not need defenders. The God who continually creates and recreates us, the God who redeems us, loves us, forgives us and sanctifies us needs no defense. The God who is love and forgiveness, who refuses to see anyone as enemy needs no defense! No one was ever sent to defend God, but to evangelize, to tell others about God. Once we have been able to introduce people to God, God takes care of the rest. Jesus gives us a few examples.

Then I will not condemn you. These are the words Jesus spoke to the woman caught in adultery. Everyone who brought her to Jesus was quick to condemn her to a painful death for her sin. Now, if Jesus does not condemn, what gives us the right to condemn. Our divisions seem to give many people the right to condemn sinners, people with whom they disagree, people who do not do what they think is right, people who do terrible things. What right to we have to condemn them when, if we brought them to Jesus, judged bad, immoral, dangerous, or evil, all we would hear from Jesus is: I will not condemn you?

I will give you living water. These are the words of Jesus to the Samaritan woman at the well. She had to come to the well during the heat of the day to avoid the condemnation of the other women because of her 'marriages.' Even his disciples could not understand how he could talk to her. He spoke with her, did not condemn her, nor ask her to get all marriages straightened out, and as she got to know Jesus, her whole life turned around. How many of us, even close disciples of Jesus would ignore someone who lived a questionable life? Yet perhaps if we helped them to know Jesus, might not they have the opportunity to change their lives?

I need to stay at your house. These are the words Jesus spoke to Zacchaeus. He was a very small man in a lot of ways. He was short and he was a tax collector, and probably a mean one. Some where he heard about Jesus, he even jumped up into a tree and risked being laughed at. Many people thought he had no right to meet Jesus. Jesus invited himself to dinner with Zacchaeus.. He did not insist that Zacchaeus change his life, give up his position and make restitution for all he had done, he just broke bread with him and see how Zacchaeus' life changed? If there is no one to whom Jesus will not reach out, then how can we refuse to reach out to those whom we think are not worthy?

Be evangelizers, not condemners and defenders! All of us are sent out to preach the Good News. Bad news is not the issue and it is not a revelation of God. It is made up for our convenience. It is easier to condemn and defend than to evangelize. But is it? We must begin by remembering that God does not see enemies, but only beloved children. That means that our first act of evangelization may very well be seeing God's beloved children as our brothers and sisters. Then we must reach out to all that we meet and tell them the stories that help people to come to know the Lord and the depths of God's love. If by our sharing people come to know the Lord, don't you think that some of the wonderful things that happened in the Gospels could happen in our times?

Tell the stories. The Good News helps people to meet Jesus. Someone who is lost or separated from loved ones might be moved to reconciliation when they hear of the Good Shepherd and the Prodigal Son. They will never be an enemy. People who think they are unforgivable might be moved to recovery if they heard the story about how Jesus forgave from the cross. Those who hunger and thirst for all that they do not have and have been denied, might be moved to confidence hearing the story of the feeding of the crowds with the loaves and fish. Every story of healing, forgiveness and caring for the poor and the outcast enables people to come to know Jesus. The all kinds of wonderful things can happen. People who were lost became disciples.

Do not forget to tell everyone about Easter. Anyone who thinks that they can never recover from something awful, need only to hear about how Jesus treated his disciples after the resurrection. Peter recovered from denying Jesus, the others recovered from running away. Those who live hopeless lives, trapped in personal Good Fridays, might actually come to know hope and release when they come to know the Risen Lord.

Granted there were times Jesus did seem to condemn, but this was usually the ones who made enemies of God, and remember he offered recovery to them too!

Jesus saves. We are often people of weak faith. The way Jesus shows us is the way we should show others. Do we really believe that JESUS SAVES? Then we should help him do just that: by helping others to meet him. Best to remember that Jesus evangelized by the things he did, as much as by what he said, perhaps more. We could all learn from this too. Being a disciple should be a joy, not a burden, a lightening of our lives, not a burdening of it. This is what Jesus has done for us. We are sent to make it possible for others to meet him, and then have all kinds of wonderful things happen, lives change, hope is restored, sin is forgiven, goodness is discovered.

We have an awesome calling. Go and tell the good news. If we ease access to the Lord and we become co-workers. God does not need defending. God needs our going and our telling. God will do the rest.

Reflection Questions:

1. Do we realize that the mission of evangelization belongs to every member of the Church?
2. How have the stories of the Good News helped you know Christ better? Has that helped your life to change so that you become a better disciple?
3. Do you still think God needs defending?
4. Have the courage to tell the good things God has done for you?

Please remember our missionary who celebrates his birthday this month:

Nov. 11: Fr. Thomas Jones, O.F.M. (Brazil)

May the Lord bless him with peace and energy in his work!

Please remember our present and former missionaries who are ill:

**Fr. Aloysius Siracuse, O.F.M. (Brazil)
Fr. Peter Sheridan, O.F.M. (Home Missions)
Fr. Finian Riley, O.F.M. (Africa)
Fr. Robert Nee, O.F.M. (Brazil)**

May God grant them health, peace and happiness!

Last month two of our missionaries died: Fr. Ignatius McGeedy, O.F.M. (Brazil) and Fr. Boniface Hanley, O.F.M. (Bolivia).

May they rest comfortably in God's arms!