

“The Challenges and Opportunities: the Life of the Catholic Mission today”

1. This weekend we celebrate **World Mission Sunday** in the Catholic Church. It’s a good opportunity not just to support the Catholic missionaries throughout the world: *priestly and religious and lay ppl* by our money and prayers, but also to reflect upon how we can be better home missionaries here in our area where we live and work and interact with others. The time we are living in has its particular challenges and opportunities, and so I want to look at these, so we can deal with the challenges better and seize the opportunities to better share our Catholic faith with those around us.
2. **All of us by our Baptism are called to be missionaries in the sense of witnessing by our life and sharing by our words the gift of the Catholic faith with other people.** That starts in our family. Growing up, depending on how good an example we received from one or both our parents, makes a huge impact on us both humanly and spiritually in ways we don’t discover until later in life. The Lord knows this of course, and so He is always willing to give us the grace of His healing and strength in the Sacraments and daily life – and He blesses us ever more in those ways, the more we open our souls up to Him in trust and confidence – all part of **the journey of holiness.** Along with our parents and rest of family influence, the culture has a big impact on us. As I mentioned last week in my homily the scourge of **secularization** or acting like God doesn’t exist, or if He does, it doesn’t really matter or have an impact on us, is something we must grapple with if we are to be a good witness to the Faith. Add to it the recent decades in which all of us have had to deal with **the grave scandal** of learning that certain priests and religious, some maybe whom even knew personally and looked up to, went astray from their vows in serious ways, and so it causes us sometimes to question our Faith. But we always need to remember that the Catholic Faith is true regardless of human sinfulness, weakness and bad example, so hopefully we have learned to put our Faith more in the blessed Trinity and not just in human instruments of the Church. Add to it **the fixation** in our culture on immediate gratification and earthly pleasure, the **overemphasis** on sports and the “cult of the body”, i.e., an **over-focus** on our physical body and physical health to the detriment

of our immortal souls and spiritual health. We all saw this play out with **the Covid panic** for a couple of years, the effects of us are still with us and will be for a long time – *sadly showing itself in Catholics who were already weak in the practice of the Faith before Covid now being away totally; or people who had seemingly a stronger Faith but let the Covid panic-mode overcome them psychologically, and so they still are away from coming to Mass every Sunday and Holy Day.* We need to pray and try to do our best to reach out to people we know that are in that sad boat and encourage them to turn to God and overcome their fears and get back to the regular practice of the Catholic Faith. We also see in our society **a focus on mental health** - which is not a bad thing, but often to the detriment again of one's spiritual health. Yes, human therapy can be good, depending on how solid the therapist is, but going to Confession is even better - and depending on the situation, sometimes we need both. We see an emphasis in our culture on protecting **the physical environment** which again is not all bad – we are called to be good stewards of God's creation - but what about the spiritual environment which is more important?

3. So we do have many challenges to deal with in terms of spreading the beautiful message of our Catholic Faith. **However God's grace is greater than any human challenge or weakness.** We just need to rely on Him more and more and the help of the prayers of our Blessed Mother and the saints and good angels. We have **a golden opportunity** to share with others the gift of God grace and saving truth – to let the many miserable modern ex-Catholics and secular people and atheists and agnostics that there is a better way and better vision of life and love - than *the world, the flesh and the devil* offer us! It starts with working on our own personal relationship with God. ***The reality is we are not going to be very good home missionaries if we don't pray much as individuals and as a family on a daily basis & reflect on the Faith.*** If activities take the place of prayer, we are in big spiritual trouble. And if we don't pray as a family, especially with our children when they are still at home, how do we expect them to keep the Faith when they go off to college or work? There are so many good resources today to learn more and share more about our Catholic faith. Take advantage of our lending library, many good Catholic shows on EWTN, podcasts and good Catholic websites. And don't forget **the power of prayer and penance for souls** as our Lady has taught us at Fatima, Lourdes, etc. God bless you.