

TWENTY-NINTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Gospel: John 17:11, 17-23

I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name, the name you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one.

Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.

“My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, ²¹ that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one—I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me”.

REFLECTION 1: SEEING THE LIGHT

Some years ago I was glad to pay a visit to Newgrange Heritage Centre along the banks of the River Boyne, Co. Meath. We were invited into that extraordinary building constructed by our Celtic ancestors around 3000 BC. Only once a year, on 21st December, does the sun on a clear morning cast a beam of light on to the wall at the end of a long passage. Those people of long ago, in an era before Christianity, must have had some inkling, some pre-vision, of a God who would one day allow the light of his glory to shine on so many in ages to come.

This brings us to the word 'mission' and to the original meaning of that word for Christians. Mission means sending. We may think of 'the foreign missions', going back to the European conquests and colonisation of the 16th century and after. We may even think of the old-style parish mission. However, 'mission' meant none of these. Mission means sending but it also implies movement. It refers to the movement within God, the dynamic interplay of love between Father, Son and Spirit. And it refers to the movement outside God, the movement of God towards God's creation. Mission is God's movement towards humanity. Again and again, Jesus talks about the one who sent me. At the Last Supper Jesus speaks of sending the Spirit, 'As the Father has sent me, so I send you' (Jn. 20: 21). When we think of mission, we should think of something that God is doing. Mission is God's reaching out so that all might share in God's life. Jesus tells us that the focus is not on himself, but on the good news of the coming of God's kingdom. The word 'kingdom' is Jesus' key word. In modern times it might be referred to as his calling card, logo or brand, his mission statement. Kingdom/Reign is his vision and inspiration. It is the passion that absorbs and drives him. Jesus speaks to us in a poetic way in parables, he speaks to our imagination. It is what God earnestly desires for God's people, God's world and us. He calls Abba (Father) when his heart is filled with God's own feelings. People who were sick, people who were poor, people who were excluded took up most of Jesus' public life. He is filled with God's own compassion for them. Compassion is a strong word in the gospels. It means feeling the pain of another as if it were one's own. When people encounter Jesus, they experience the compassionate face of God - they experience the reign of God.

The whole idea around Mission Sunday is for us Catholics, we Christians, to reflect that we possess a treasure we call the good news of the Gospel. That good news is not to be hoarded, but like seed is to be broadcast around this planet of ours, so that the millions who have not yet heard that good news might be excited and enthused to welcome it heart and soul. Through prayer, financial support and personnel we strive today to pass on the message so that the light of Christ might penetrate through the dark avenues of hope-filled people.