



Archbishop of Montreal

Homily
Wednesday, April 8, 2020

Christm Mass (bilingual homily) (Mt 26:14-25)

The Spirit of the Lord is Upon Me.

When Jesus speaks these words, he speaks of himself. But now that these words are transmitted through Holy Scripture, they apply to all the baptized, as all those who are baptized have become missionary disciples.

All of the Christians who have been baptized and who received the sacrament of confirmation, are missionary disciples. And as missionary disciples, this Word of God “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,” is for each one of us.

These words apply to each and every one of us.

We are living in a pandemic when time feels as if it were suspended. Frozen in time! In this suspended time, we do everything to avoid gatherings in order to respect the physical distancing regulations to fight contagion. It is important that we do so.

But at the same time, from the viewpoint of mission, from the viewpoint of life itself, life somehow continues. But how does it continue? How can life continue when we are living with physical distancing? How does the mission continue when we are in a state of physical distancing?

This is a bit like the journey on which we have been together for several weeks now since the health emergency was declared.

At first, we stopped, thinking all would soon be as it was. We just wait a couple of weeks, until April 13 at the latest, and then all is normal again.

But little by little we realized that we were not going back soon to how it was. Therefore, we really have to think ‘mission.’ We have to continue to think ‘mission.’

We have to ask ourselves today, here and now, how can we continue to be on a mission? How can we be on a mission without physical gathering, without physical contact and respecting physical distancing? This is kind of what we are learning together. It is kind of what we are sharing with each other.

First of all, the idea is not to come with ready-made solutions or the perfect recipe. First of all, the idea is to rely on the Holy Spirit! The Holy Spirit is always sent to guide us!

We are always filled with the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is very imaginative! We can count on the Holy Spirit to inspire us in prayers, in actions, in finding the right words, in being in mission, growing in mission, and continuing the mission.

This leads to the challenge we are facing together. We need each other. But we also need the Holy Spirit to support us on our way.

This means that what we need first each day is prayer, and we must rediscover how to pray. As we know, prayer is the foundation of the mission and also is a mission itself! Perhaps the only thing that I can do is to pray, and I am already in mission! This is what Saint Thérèse of Lisieux taught us. Prayer is the lever that lifts the world.

Therefore, praying is already being on a mission. At the same, the Holy Spirit enlightens us in prayer. The Holy Spirit inspires when we say a few words or act subtly, or when we act boldly and speak at length. The Holy Spirit inspires our generosity and our concerns. He inspires us in prayer so that we can even learn to hold the entire world and all humanity in our prayers.

Therefore, how can we be on a mission? How can we support each other? How can we be in mission together? How can we be in mission to testify to Jesus Christ? In mission to testify that no matter how isolated we are, God is close to every human being, each and every one of us.

How can we testify to Jesus Christ in our life, how can we testify that Jesus Christ has the power to give us peace, how can we testify no matter how afraid we are of the illness that might afflict us, no matter how worried we are about our economic future?

Yes, this is the testimony that we are to give. Jesus Christ has the power to calm our spirits, Jesus Christ has the power to carry us, Jesus Christ has the power to guide us. We can entrust our presence and our future to him. We can entrust ourselves entirely to God.

In this time, we are called to pray. Praying is already being on a mission. We are called to invoke the Holy Spirit, we are called to open the Bible every day, read the Bible every day, pray with the Bible every day. And through the prayer of the Bible, we put ourselves before God in prayer. The Holy Spirit guides us, the Holy Spirit inspires our gestures, words, thoughts of prayers. The Holy Spirit is always on a mission. The Holy Spirit is not on a pause! He is always on a mission.

In the mission of the Lord, the mission has become a person: Jesus Christ, and it is Jesus Christ himself who gives us his Holy Spirit.

Therefore, the mission is not on pause! It is always at work, always in motion. How can we, in this time, how can we be here and now on a mission? It is because here and now, the Holy Spirit is with us.

Therefore, I invite you to pray daily while thinking of the Lord's call. What is the Lord's will? What is his call? Come together in your pastoral teams. Pray together as a family.

Often, prayer is personal, and we pray individually. Indeed, such personal prayer always remains important. But at the same time, we have to learn how to pray together: in our parishes, our missions, in our religious organizations, in our communities, or with our family.

We need to learn to pray together. We need to learn to take the time to pray together. At the same time, we need to discover that we are all on a mission and that we are on a mission together.

Perhaps we can take advantage of the lockdown time forced upon us to reflect on the fact that it is not just the individual who is on a mission.

It is the people of God who are on a mission. The whole Church, as the body of Christ, animated by the Holy Spirit, is in mission. Perhaps we can take advantage of this time to enter more fully into the sense of mission.

It can seem like a paradox but perhaps, when we were the most paralyzed, we finally discover better our sense of mission. This is not just for a moment, there is no magic solution, it does not happen in an instant.

It is a journey, it is a process. However, if we embark on this road together, under the guidance of God, being in mission as the Spirit of the Lord is with the people of God, then the Church is the temple of the Holy Spirit.

As apparently, we are frozen in time, not moving, maybe it can be the time to renew our sense of mission, and renew the sense that we are all together on a mission.

We may be frozen in time, but the mission is not frozen. Jesus Christ is always at work, the Holy Spirit is always moving to inspire the souls, our souls, our spirit is always at work. And so, we are called to pray every day, which is already to be on a mission. But to pray every day to ask the Lord, not only for us as individuals, to be on the mission, to follow the will of God, to be an instrument of his peace and of his love. But also, we are called to learn to do it together. And as apparently, we are frozen, really frozen, not moving, maybe it can be the time to renew our sense of mission, and renew the sense, not only a personal mission, but we are all together on a mission because the spirit of the Lord is upon us.

Therefore, pray with confidence that the Lord keeps us in mission. The mission is great and remains great. There are people who are suffering, who are in pain, people who are looking for the purpose of life, who live in solitude, and who are worried.

But we can support each other and testify that Jesus Christ is present to each human soul, to each person. No matter what their personal, family, or social situation is, Jesus Christ never ceases to give his life for each and everyone of us.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Christian Lépine". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

† Christian Lépine
Archbishop of Montreal