

Missionary Commentary

Twenty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time
September 1, 2024

Sunday Readings

Deuteronomy 4:1-2, 6-8

Psalm 15:2-3a, 3b-4a, 4b-5

James 1:17-18, 21b-22, 27

Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23

[USCCB Link to the Readings](#)

The Power of Love

Reflecting on the readings for today's liturgy brought back to my mind one of my favorite writings of Pope Francis, *Joy of the Gospel*. In it he refers to all baptized persons as missionary disciples expanding the old way of thinking that missionaries are only those who go to foreign lands. I lived in Brazil for 32 years in the Amazon area, so part of my summer routine is to make mission appeals for my sisters in Brazil. I begin with a brief explanation of *Joy of the Gospel*, and then ask the people to raise their hands if they have been baptized. Almost everyone raises their hands with smiles on their faces. Then I say, "Raise your hand if you are a missionary." Most of the time one or two people will raise their hands, but I have never had more than five people who considered themselves missionaries.

After all these years that *Joy of the Gospel* has been promulgated, it is sad that we have not raised the consciousness of our baptized Catholics of their calling as missionaries. What is even sadder for me is that with all the scripture texts that are connected to this calling, their fundamental meaning is not broken open for deeper reflection. In the first reading we hear, "For what great nation is there that has gods so close to it as the Lord, our God..." Our God is so close to us and desires that we become ever closer to God. God's love and actions toward us are invitations for us to respond in the same way. This love is not to be directed only to God, but to all people with no exceptions. These actions of justice and mercy are not to only please God, but to help all people understand the depth and power of God's love. We are sent, we are missioned to embrace this task.

The beautiful and profound words and actions of Jesus are not to be just admired, but are to be duplicated in the lives of all of us. Our Catholic traditions and devotions are not meant to keep us satisfied when we do them, but to impel us to Go Forth and help others to discover their own calling and to continue the works of justice and peace no matter where we live, our age, our financial situation, our education, etc. God counts on our missionary spirit to carry on the legacy that we have received from Jesus through our Baptism. It is because of the love we have received that we desire to love even more. There is a tremendous power that comes with love. May all of us open our hearts, minds and being to be this instrument of God's love.

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Notes on the Sunday Readings

First Reading

Deuteronomy 4:1-2, 6-8 — Scripture contains some very powerful words that speak to us of God's nature. One of those is in the first reading for today's liturgy. "For what great nation is there that has gods so close to it as the Lord, our God, is to us whenever we call upon him?"

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 15:2-3a, 3b-4a, 4b-5 — The measurement of an authentic relationship with God is clearly described in Psalm 15. It is all based on acts of justice toward our neighbors that we choose because we desire to be in the presence of our God.

Second Reading

James 1:17-18, 21b-22, 27 — The letter of James written many centuries after the Psalms contains the very same message. Our actions are the proof of the veracity of our following of Jesus. We can hear the word; we can meditate on the word, but it is only in the doing of the Word can we claim to be faithful disciples of Jesus.

Gospel

Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23 — Truly the Gospel is the living Word of God spoken to us through Jesus, God's Son. Knowing all the correct doctrines, practicing all the right gestures, and repeating all the holy phrases do not bring us closer to the Heart of our God. We can only get there when our hearts are loving ones, imitating the actions of Jesus with mercy to all without exception.

Notes and commentary by Sr. Nancy Schramm, ofc, a [Franciscan Sister of the Sacred Heart](#) currently ministering at a rural mission church in Pembroke Township, Illinois who previously served in the Amazon area of Brazil for 32 years and is past president of USCMA.

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