

Go and Invite Everyone to the Banquet

World Mission Day Message - 2024

There is a long tradition of the Holy Father giving a message for World Mission Day. Pope Francis released his 2024 World Mission Day Message on January 25, 2024, the Feast of the Conversion of St. Paul. He drew his inspiration from Matthew 22:1-14, the parable of the wedding feast.



This study guide is designed to help missionaries reflect on the Holy Father's message and incorporate its insights into their efforts to animate mission. Pope Francis focuses on three themes from the parable: go and invite, to the marriage feast, everyone which, he believes, is timely given the synodal journey that seeks to "refocus the Church on her primary task" of preaching the Gospel in today's world.

1. The king commands his servants to "go out" and "invite."
 - a. Mission is a tireless "going out" to all men and women. Tireless.
 - b. The servants were sent first to guests who refused, then "to the thoroughfares."
 - c. God, great in love and mercy, constantly sets out to encounter all women and men, calling them into his kingdom, even in the face of their indifference or refusal.
 - d. Christ, the Good Shepherd, is sent to the lost sheep "of the people of Israel" but, even further, to the distant sheep.
 - e. Before, and after, the resurrection, Jesus joins his disciples to his mission.
 - f. The Church, "in fidelity to the mission she has received from the Lord," will continue to go to the ends of the earth. Repeatedly we go. Without growing weary or losing heart in the face of difficulties or obstacles.
 - g. Pope Francis thanks the missionaries who have "left everything." We are all called.
 - h. We must go to the crossroads of today's world.
 - i. We must resist being an "imprisoning Church" that keeps the Lord for ourselves and, instead, be missionaries because Jesus "came for mission."
 - j. So we go, but we go to invite. Come to the wedding. The invitation is urgent, kind, and respectful; close, tender, and compassionate, not coercive, or proselytize.
2. To the marriage feast. The fullness of our human existence. Our Eucharist.
 - a. The wedding feast is the eschatological feast, the Messianic feast found in Isaiah 25.
 - b. This is the "fullness of time" the kingdom of God anticipates. It is the great arch of missionary activity – from the first to the second coming of the Lord.
 - c. There is an urgency to preaching the Gospel. The banquet of the Lord is different than the banquets of consumerism, selfishness, wealth, and individualism. It is characterized by joy, justice, and fraternity in communion with God and others.
 - d. The fullness of life is anticipated now in the Eucharist. Evangelization is intrinsically linked to the invitation to the Eucharistic table. The Eucharist is a real foretaste of the final banquet foretold by the prophets (*Sacramentum Caritatis*, 31).
 - e. "We cannot approach the Eucharistic table without being drawn into the mission which, beginning in the very heart of God, is meant to reach all people." (ibid., 84)

- f. The Eucharistic renewal that many local Churches are promoting in the post-Covid era will be essential for reviving the missionary spirit in each member of the faithful.
 - g. In preparation for the Jubilee of 2025, we all need to deepen our commitment to participate in the Mass and to pray for the Church's mission of evangelization.
 - h. The Eucharist makes us pilgrims and missionaries of hope.
- 3. Everyone. The Universal mission of Christ forms us, his disciples, into a fully synodal and missionary Church.
 - a. This is the heart of mission: that “all,” excluding no one. “God our Savior desires everyone to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth.” (1 Tim 2:4).
 - b. Christ’s missionary disciples have always had a heartfelt concern for all persons.
 - c. The servants gathered “all whom they found, both good and bad.” (Matt 22:10)
 - d. The mission for all requires the commitment of all. We need to continue our journey towards a fully synodal and missionary Church in the service of the Gospel. Synodality is essentially missionary and, vice versa, mission is always synodal. Consequently, close missionary cooperation is today all the more urgent and necessary, both in the universal Church and in the particular Churches.
 - e. We “gaze” at Mary who asked Jesus to perform his first miracle at a wedding feast.

Mission leaders are encouraged to read and pray over the Holy Father’s Message for 2024. You can easily connect with it [HERE](#) on the Vatican website. The message is also available in other languages on the Vatican website.

*Mission is a tireless “going out” to all
men and women. Tireless.*

This study guide is a service of the United States Catholic Mission Association (USCMA). Another service is **Go Forth...** a commentary and podcast on mission – lived by a witness, who responded to a call, found in the Sunday Readings. <https://uscatholicmission.org/go-forth>.

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	<p style="text-align: center;">UNITED STATES CATHOLIC MISSION ASSOCIATION NETWORK Lobby - c/o USCMA 820 First Street, NE – Suite 350 Washington, DC 20002 Phone: 202.832-3112 • Fax: 202.832-3688 Email: uscma@uscatholicmission.org Website: www.uscatholicmission.org</p>
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