

Lesson 7

MEANS FOR MISSIONARY ACTIVITIES



The evangelists describe the missionary activities of Jesus like this: “In the morning while it was still very dark, he got up and went out into a deserted place, and there he prayed. And Simon and his companions hunted for Him. When they found Him, they said to him ‘Everyone is searching for you.’ He answered, ‘Let us go on to the neighbouring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do.’” (Mk. 1 : 35-38). “Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing every disease and every sickness among the people” (Mt. 4 :23).

The foundation and model of the missionary activities of the Church is the missionary activity of Jesus Himself. Jesus obtained strength for all his missionary activities through his long hours of prayer to the Father. He preached the Gospel

from morning to evening. He went around doing good to all. His suffering and crucifixion were the climax of his missionary activities.

The purpose of all the missionary activities of the Church is to spread through the proclamation of the Gospel, the kingdom of God to the ends of the earth. The basis of the missionary activities is the will of God that everyone should know the truth and be saved. (A.G. 7). The Church fulfils this mission through prayer, proclamation, service and suffering. The example of saints who drew many to Jesus through these means gives inspiration to the members of the Church.

The Mission by means of Prayer

Important among the missionary activities of the Church is the mission of prayer. The realisation that through intercessory prayer we can lead many to conversion and spiritual strength persuades the Church to do this service. Imitating the example of Jesus, who prayed for his disciples and empowered them, the early Church began to pray for those who proclaimed the Gospel and who suffered in the name of the word of God. Whenever they faced obstacles to proclaim the Gospel publicly and when the apostles and disciples were imprisoned while proclaiming the Gospel, the Church sought refuge in prayer. (Acts 4: 23-31).



We can accomplish the mission of prayer in all circumstances. St. Little Tresa is an example for this always. She prayed for Francini who was condemned to death. Through her prayer she helped Francini, the convict, to repent, and get converted to God to save his soul. Her prayer style so simple and affectionate. She was always alert not to lose her friendship and union with God through the least sin. She offered all her sufferings joyfully for the missionaries. She longed to make known the message of Gospel throughout the world and lying on her sickbed she prayed for the conversion of the whole world. She wanted to be a missionary for the world and in 1927 she was raised to be the patroness of the mission of the whole world. She is the

heavenly patroness of the Little Flower Mission League, the largest association of the lay missionary apostolate in Asia. It was in 1997 she was officially called Doctor of the Church by Holy Father St. John Paul II.

St. Euphrasia is another member of the Carmelite congregation who made prayer, the centre of her life. People called her 'praying mother'. She used to sit in the chapel day and night praying and saying the rosary. Her main food was prayer. Even while she was engaged in work, her prayer was not hindered. Her life is a witness to how prayer and meditation will nourish one's spiritual life. She was called for her heavenly reward on 29th August, 1952 and on 3rd December, 2006 she was declared 'Blessed' by Pope Benedict XVI. On 23rd November 2014, Mother Euphrasia was canonized by Pope Francis.



The Mission by means of Proclamation

Proclamation of the Gospel is the greatest missionary activity. Proclamation of the Gospel helps to know Jesus and to understand the mysteries of the kingdom of God. As St. Paul says: "How are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim Him? Proclamation of the Gospel is really the vocation and duty of the Church. (EN 14). All the apostles were powerful proclaimers. Many saints like St. Francis Xavier, Francis Assisi etc. bore witness to Jesus through proclamation. St. Kuriakose Elias Chavara and Bl. Kunjachan Thevarparambil showed the world how proclamation can be through action. With the permission of the Bishop, along with his Gurus, Doctors, Rev. Fr. Thomas Porukara and Palackal, Chavara founded two religious congregations for the renewal of the Church. Understanding the necessity of education for the integral growth of man, as the Vicar General of the Syrians, he gave orders that along with the Church, schools also should be established.



He recognised the great role of media in reaching Christian message to the family and hence he his attention to the mission of the media. He started the press in Mannanam in 1844. The orphanage which he started in Kainakary is the first attempt in protecting the poor. He proclaimed the Gospel by conducting retreats in parishes and giving the Gospel message after reading of the Gospel in the Holy Mass. Thus he gave various dimensions to evangelisation. This man of action entered heaven on 3rd January, 1871. On 8th February, 1986, Pope John Paul II of happy memories declared him 'Blessed'. On 23rd November 2014, he was canonized as a Saint by Pope Francis.

Activity-1. Prepare a report discussing how a lay person in the modern world can proclaim the Gospel.

Bl. Kunjachan Thevarparambil was a parish priest who dedicated his life for the uplift of the Dalits-people who were ignored in the society. He baptised the Dalits and made them members of the Church. He used to call them 'my children'. He was called for the heavenly reward on 16th Oct. 1973 and was declared 'Blessed on 30th April, 2006 by Pope Benedict XVI.



Mission of Service

There are many great souls who bore witness to Jesus in this world through selfless service. They made the world experience through their lives Jesus who went about doing good to all. St. Mother Theresa of Calcutta who is also known by the other name 'Mother of the destitute' is a good example of the mission of service. "For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment you shall love your neighbour as yourself" (Gal. 5:14). Mother Theresa understood the meaning of this

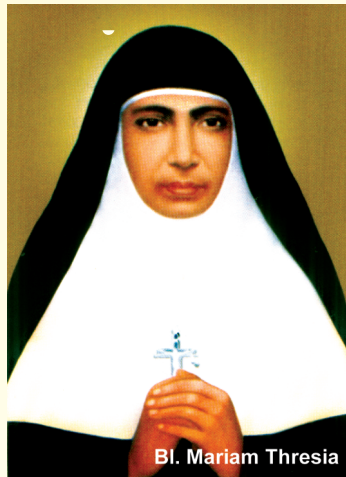
verse well. She saw everyone in need as her neighbour. She nursed all the suffering and the sorrowful, the orphans and the dying and the old who were deserted in the streets of Calcutta. She tried to remove sickness, starvation and poverty of the poor in all the ways possible. She saw Jesus in the exploited and the poor. She founded a congregation to protect them.



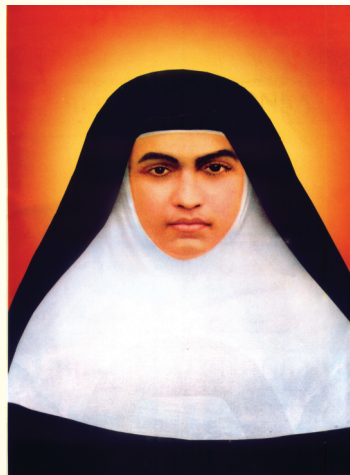
When hearts are in flame with God's love people will have a great desire to share this love with others through actions. Mother Theresa who kindled the light of love and mercy in human hearts says: We shall love until it hurts us and give ourselves to them. Jesus did ordinary things with extra-ordinary love. This is my apostolate". She taught the world well what is missionary apostolate through her own life. Jesus who said, whatever you do to the least of my brethren, you do it unto me, rewarded her work in this world itself. The world called her the prophet of charity. She was honoured with the Nobel Prize for Peace. She was called for her heavenly reward on 5th September, 1997 and on 19th October, 2003 she was declared 'Blessed' by Pope John Paul II. On 4th September 2016, she was canonized as a Saint by Pope Francis.

Apostolate of Suffering

Jesus revealed the salvific value of suffering to the world which viewed suffering as an evil. He received the pains in His life as the will of the Father and tried to remove the sufferings of others. He proved the salvific meaning of suffering through the cross. He saved the world through suffering. Just as the grain of wheat that falls into the ground and dies produces much fruit, suffering also produces great spiritual fruit. There are many saints in the Church who made their suffering salvific by uniting their pains and suffering with the sufferings of the saviour. St. Alphonsa and Bl. Mariam Theresia belong to their category.



The life of Bl. Mariam Thresia, the foundress of the Holy Family Congregation, was one who understood the salvific value of suffering. She ruled by the thought that she was called to weep, suffer and sit awake in prayer with Jesus. She accepted joyfully the hurts and wounds created by her own deeds of penance and sickness. She was keen on offering her sufferings and to do sacrifices for the conversion of sinners. She was called for heavenly reward on 8th June, 1926. She was called 'Blessed' by Pope John Paul II on 9th April, 2000 and 2019 October 13th Canonized as Saint by Pope Francis in Rome.



St. Alphonsa fulfilled her apostolate through a life of suffering. She was afflicted by different ailments from the day of her profession. When she was bed-ridden in the convent at Bharananganam, she gained many souls for the Lord, by uniting her sufferings with the cross of Christ, without getting distressed while she was sick. What strengthened her was the thought of the crucified Lord - "Indeed all who want to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" (2 Timo. 3:12). These words of St. Paul strengthened her. She understood that there is no comfort without pain and no fruit without hard work and only those who suffer much can become noble creatures. She was called to her eternal reward on 28th July, 1946 when she was only 36. She was called 'Blessed' on 8th Feb. 1986 by Pope John Paul II and later Canonized by Pope Benedict XVI on 12th October 2009.

We can also join in the apostolate of the Church by offering small sacrifices for the success of the apostolate and praying for the missionaries. Let us also perform the missionary duty of the Church by talking about Jesus whenever we get a chance and doing the services in the parish community and other fields of activity.

Let us Read the Word of God and Meditate

Mt. 18 : 1-5

A Word of God to Remember

“But strive first for the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things will be given to you as well” (Mt. 6 : 33)

Let us Pray

O Lord Jesus, help us to be witnesses to the Gospel through prayer, suffering and proclamation.

My Decision

I will be loyal and sincere in all my deeds and thus bear witness to Jesus.

Let us think with the Church

Saints who are called to the heavenly home and are seated close to the Lord, never stops to intercede for us to the Father, in and through Jesus Christ. They offer the Father the merit they gained on the earth through Christ, the only intercessor between God and man. Here, they served God in all things. They completed the suffering lacking in Christ in their own bodies for the body of Christ, the Church (Catholic Church. L.G. 49)

Let us find out the answers

1. What are the four means of apostolate ?
2. Write a note on 'apostolate of prayer'.
3. Illustrate that St. Alphonsa was a missionary of suffering.
4. How did St. Mother Theresa become an apostle of service ?
5. How did St. Chavara proclaim the word of God ?