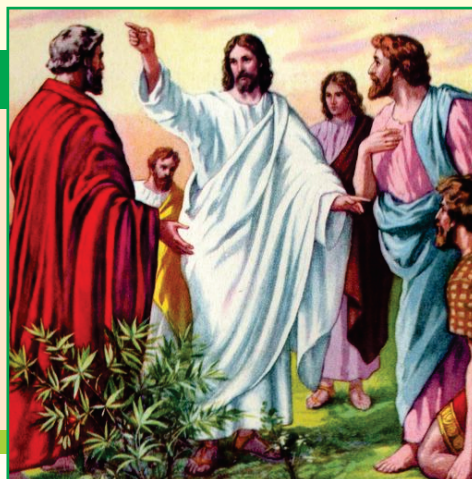


CHAPTER 12

You, Be My Witness



After resurrection just before His ascension, Jesus called His disciples near Him and said: “You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth. When he had said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight” (Act 1:8-9).

Jesus had chosen His disciples to be along with Him for four years. He taught them, had given chances to see His miracles directly and listens to His teachings. And then Jesus sent His disciples to the end of the world with a mission of witness. Similarly, during the last twelve years, Jesus was teaching us, the members of the church through catechism classes and allowed us to participate in His services through life training. Now, at the end of this training Jesus is sending all of us, the members of the Church by baptism, to the ends of the world. He sends us with the exhortation-'be my witnesses'.

Each Christian Disciple – a Witness to Jesus

Each Christian disciple is a witness to Jesus. Wherever they may be, they are called to bear witness to Christ like a lamp placed on the pedestal. Jesus said: “Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your father in heaven” (Mt.5:16). He said again: “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (Jn. 13:35). He also made it clear that you are the salt of the earth and the light of the world.

Christians are people who became children of God and members of the Church through baptism. He blessed us in confirmation with the power to bear witness to Him and to proclaim the gospel. Thus we are sent to be witness to Him. We can be witnesses to Him in different zones and different ways.

Different Fields of Witnessing

Christian witness has mainly three fields. They are the family, parish and community.

Family: - A person is born into Christian life, grow and live in the context of the family. It is there that Christian witness is most essential. When parents live obeying the words of Jesus, they become a model and inspiration to their children. Family becomes a home of love. When children are trained in the words of Jesus, family becomes a Christian *gurukulam*.

Parish: - The second phase of witnessing life for a Christian is his parish community. It is in the context of the parish the faithful forms his life of faith, lives it and shares it. We can bear witness to Jesus by participating in the teachings of the parish and Sunday celebrations with devotion. We must be careful to bear witness to Jesus by participating in the activities of the pious associations, family units and faith formation activities and deeds of charity. Another stage for Christian witness is to participate in various pastoral activities of the parish.

Community:- The third phase of witness is the community. Each one of us is a citizen of the country or community in which we live. Each Christian is obliged to live as a good citizen. Every Christian can be witnesses to Christ by fulfilling one's responsibilities and works in the community properly and exactly. Christians can turn their zones of activities and services as areas of witnessing. All the faithful should be ready to use all the God-given positions, gifts and talents, taking them in the real sense and using them for the good of man. Their life will become a testimony to others.

Different Ways of Witness

Christian witness has several ways. Important among them are life witness, sacramental - life, evangelization, deeds of charity, struggle for values, social activities, life of suffering, martyrdom etc.

Life Witness

The most important among Christian witness is an exemplary life. The life of those who believe in Jesus itself should become a witness. Their life should be according to the teachings of Jesus. Their life style in family, church, and community itself should be an example before others. We have to be careful that through our lives and activities others may know God and lead a life of virtues. In future you may be a teacher or a nurse or a police officer or a doctor or a farmer or a businessman. Wherever you may be, whatever may be your work, you should work with the conviction that by your life God is blessing others and see your work as a service and bring it to completion. Then only we will be able to be witness to Jesus and be instruments of His grace.

Evangelization

The second phase to witness to Jesus is evangelization. We must speak to others about Jesus the savior. We must speak to them about the salvation He had given and gives. Then only others will experience salvation and own it. And further, it is the mission of every Christian. Jesus entrusted this mission to His disciples before His ascension “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation” (Mk.16: 15). Second Vatican Council also teaches this repeatedly. “Church is missionary by its very nature. The fundamental mission of the missionary church is evangelization” (Mission 2: 35).

Sacramental Life

The noblest duty of Christian disciples is the worship of God. The greatest worship of the Church is the Eucharist. Christian disciples worship God and obtain divine power through the Eucharist and other sacraments. Divine life is imparted to the faithful through the Holy Eucharist and other sacraments. We can become witness to Jesus through active participation in the Holy Mass, frequent reception of sacraments, participation in Sunday celebrations and enthusiastic participation in the pastoral activities of the Parish. Through our sacramental life we can be an instrument for others to lead a life of faith.

Acts of Charity

Acts of charity is a large zone to bear witness to Christ. These are the deeds done in the name of Jesus to help the suffering, the sorrowful, the orphans and the weak. We become witness to Christ through charitable acts like giving food to the hungry and water to the thirsty, cloth to the naked; visit the sick and the prisoners etc. Through such deeds many, irrespective of caste or creed, come to know and experience the love of Jesus. With this spirit, we do various acts of charity at parish level, and diocesan level. Orphanages, hospitals, educational institutions, old age homes, institutions for the physically and mentally handicapped are examples of such activities of charity under the leadership of the Church. We should participate in such acts of charity individually and family-wise. We must take care to participate in such acts of charity by helping the poor financially as much as we can.

Social Work

In addition to acts of charity every Christian is obliged to engage in social work. Jesus fought against evil. Christians should be careful to raise their voice against evil and wrong social systems and to stand for Gospel values. It is the duty of every Christian. Leaders, Christians and

non-Christians, inspired by Christian values, very often, lighted the lamp for changes. Similarly, let it be possible for us to stand for goodness in every circumstance, to fight against the evil and an instrument for social changes.

Life of Suffering

Another area of Christian witness is a life of suffering. It is an essential part of Christian life. When we obey the words of Jesus and live, it is natural that we get chances for suffering. Jesus said, "If you want to follow me, take up your cross and come after me" (Mt.16:24). Hence, every Christian should be aware of the fact that when we take up sufferings for Jesus, we are blessed. Similarly, we may be tortured by the very fact that we are Christians. But Christians should not become feeble or go astray in sufferings. The disciples and martyrs were remained strong and happy before persecution and suffering in the name of Jesus. If we want to be so in the midst of persecution and suffering we need the grace of the Holy Spirit. It is this grace that enabled the apostles and the martyrs to surrender their lives even unto death for Jesus. When we are filled with this divine power through prayer and sacraments, we too will get the power to bear witness to Jesus Christ.

It is this message which Jesus gives to each one of us who have completed twelve years of Christian formation- 'You, be my witnesses.' Bearing this message in our hearts let us be witness to Jesus in all the circumstances of our life. Thus let Jesus make us worthy for eternal bliss promised to those who bear witness to Jesus in this world.

I. Find out the Answers

1. Every Christian is a bear witness to Jesus. Explain.
2. What are the different phases of a witnessing life?
3. How do we witness to Jesus through the proclamation of the Gospel?
4. Social change is the mission of a Christian. Explain
5. How does a life of suffering become a witness?

II. Let us Discuss

1. Find out the different phases where the youth can be a witness to Jesus.
2. The influence of faith- formation in your life?

III. Activity

In my future life, I will bear witness to Christ and Christian values.

IV. Let us Enlighten our Hearts

“You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its Saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything, but is thrown out and trampled under foot. You are the light of the World” (Mt. 5:13-14).