

GO & INVITE EVERYONE TO THE BANQUET

cf. Mt 22:9



Reflection:

October 2024

Pope Francis chose the theme “Go and invite everyone to the banquet” (Mt 22:9) for this year’s World Mission Day, highlighting key features of evangelisation. Echoing this, Luis Cardinal Tagle urged the participants of the 10th National Eucharistic Congress in Indianapolis thus: “When the priest says, ‘The Mass is ended. Go in the peace of Christ,’ please GO! What you have heard, touched, and tasted; you must share with others.”

However, as Pope Francis points out, “Today’s drama in the Church is that Jesus keeps knocking on the door, but from within so that we will let him out! Often, we end up being an ‘imprisoning’ Church which does not let the Lord out!”. We have no excuse but to get out of our comfort zones and bring Christ to others, even in the face of failed missions in the past.

If my Jesus Youth friends had given up on me when I challenged them with atheistic views, I wouldn’t be here today. Instead, their fervent prayers and constant accompaniment prevailed over my ignorance, planting seeds of faith that eventually bore fruit. Most of us have seen powerful conversions not through eloquent preaching, but through words and gestures from hearts eager to see Christ formed in others. Let’s nurture this intentional journey, pursuing others with penance and prayer, and renew our commitment to ‘walk with one’ and fulfil our call, for indeed, “Every Jesus Youth is a missionary!”

Jesus invites everyone to His heavenly banquet, and as Jesus Youth, we have a unique calling to embrace everyone, especially teens, youth, and young couples. Can we open our hearts to welcome them all, transcending language and cultural barriers? Pope Francis inspires us to be generous like the sower, scattering seeds far and wide, trusting in God’s power to transform hearts and lives.

In the parable, the king’s invitation is freely offered, without coercion. As we share the Good News, do we respect others’ freedom to choose? A fruitful missionary strikes a balance between urgency and respect, cultivating relationships, sharing Jesus, and inviting others to fellowship for growth, all the while honouring their autonomy.

How prepared is our community to embrace seekers with unconditional love and respect? Do we actively seek out those who may feel marginalised, regardless of their appearance or behaviour, and go the extra mile to make them feel at home? By doing so, we can create a rich and vibrant fellowship that offers a feast of friendship, music, faith-sharing, heartfelt worship, and charismatic gifts, making everyone feel welcome and valued.

Pope Francis highlights the stark contrast between the world’s fleeting ‘banquets’ of consumerism, selfish comfort, wealth accumulation, and individualism with the Gospel’s invitation to a transformative feast - the Divine Banquet. This heavenly feast is marked by joy, sharing, justice, and fraternity, in communion with God and others.

In the parable, the king invites all to his Son’s wedding banquet, symbolising the eschatological banquet we are called to share in our evangelisation mission. This invitation is intrinsically linked to the call to the Eucharistic table, where the Lord nourishes us with His Word and His Body and Blood. Pope Francis reminds us that “we cannot approach the Eucharistic table without being drawn into the mission that, beginning in the very heart of God, is meant to reach all people.”

This calls us to a deeper engagement with the Eucharist and its transformative power. As we receive the gift of Jesus’ presence in the Eucharist, the culmination of His mission, we are compelled to ask: How fervent are we in sharing this gift with others, and how zealous have we become as missionaries?”

A Eucharistic community is inherently a missionary community. As a missionary movement, let us reflect on all our missionary efforts thus far. With every step, may we learn from our mistakes, rejoice in the abundance of good fruit, and press onward with unshakeable hope. Joyfully and courageously let us go forth and proclaim Jesus for the life of the world.

Sindhu Nadarajan

For discussion:
Our desire as a movement is to enter deeply into the missionary life of the Church. Should not our household be the breeding ground of such missionary initiatives?
Discuss and decide on one missionary activity that you can take up as a household - it could be outreaches to local parishes, social mission work in orphanages/old age homes/soup kitchens, conducting focused intercessory prayers for your chosen mission country or even seriously considering a mission exposure trip together in the near future.

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