

**THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH**  
**(J.F.M. H - 1.9.2016)**

'Home Mission Day–The Spread of the Gospel' is on the 18<sup>th</sup> September. The duty of spreading the Gospel falls on all of us from the time of our Baptism when we became members of the Mystical Body of Christ. We have to be absolutely certain that through baptism, that great and beautiful Sacrament the foundation of our life of grace, every Christian is not just empowered for mission but is commissioned for it. We are incorporated into Christ, and the work of Our Saviour is our work as well. So we have to be Mission minded. In fact you have probably noticed that certain recent papal documents and also documents that have come out from the bishops urge us to see ourselves as involved in the Mission work of the Church all over the world. To do so with any real success, we need the Guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Pope Leo XIII speaking about the Holy Spirit and the Church told us that: ***"It is enough to state that, since Christ is the Head of the Church, the Holy Spirit is her soul."*** The use of the term "soul" conveys quite a lot about the Holy Spirit. While we are alive, our human souls, exist within the boundaries of our bodies. They have a type of presence in us, proper to spirits, known as definitive. That is, each soul exists, in its entirety in the whole of the space circumscribed by our bodies, as well as in each part of that body, though not to the exclusion of any other spirit. In the case of the Third person of the Blessed Trinity, (who has no limits), His presence is not circumscribed, by our bodies, or anything else. He is said to be "indwelling". He is present in His entirety in every member of Christ's mystical body, (the Church), in Our Lady, and in each of us. No one has only a part of the Holy Spirit, **even though we have differing states of grace and do not co-operate with Him evenly.**

There is in this a personal degree of human co-operation, a divinely designed feature of mankind. It is so important that God the Father waited for the agreement of Our Lady, before making her the Mother of His only begotten Son. St. Augustine expressed it well: *"The just God made me, without me, but without me, will not make me just"*. We are designed to give or withhold the co-operation upon which our future depends. Like the Angels, and Adam and Eve, we are designed to be tested. This design feature, involving freewill, was present in Christ himself, as He was a real human person. We can see a reference to it's consequences, in St. Luke's account of the Presentation of Our Lord in the Temple. It ends with the words: ***"And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature, and in favour with God and man"***. (Lk. 2.52)

Christ added His human co-operation to the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Like us, while He was alive on earth He could gain merit. The gaining of merit could affect His human body and so He could increase in wisdom. But Christ also has a mystical body which was, and continues to be, affected. The Council of Trent made it clear that we derive our whole capability of meriting and satisfying, as well as the actual merits and satisfactions, solely from the infinite treasure of merits which Christ gained for us on the cross. (Trent Session VI) Although **Christ as God the Son, being immutable**, could not gain merit, (for this would imply that at one time He was less meritorious than at another). However, Christ's mystical body, the Church, can gain merit.

It is not difficult to see this in its history, for there were times when its members were co-operating more fully with the Holy Spirit, and became more Christ like. They then receive more fruits of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, than at other times. We pray for the Church to be blessed, and at the same time we must co-operate more fully with the Holy Spirit and more fruits of the gifts of the Holy Spirit will be showered on the Church and us, its members.

How does one co-operate with the Holy Spirit? It is an important question because the Holy Spirit dwells within us. St. Paul reminds us of the consequences of this very forcibly: **"Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and that temple is you."** (1. Cor. 3.16) In Christ, we have the perfect example of the way we are to co-operate, in fact He told us that He "is the Way". We have to be Christ like. In the saints, men, women and children of every walk and condition of life, we have further examples. They witness to the Holy Spirit in their lives by being Christ like.

When Christ asked St. Paul on the road to Damascus: **"Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?"** (Acts 9.4.) He personally identified Himself with the members of His mystical body, the Church. That body, the Church, was His own body of which He is the Head. If we persecute, snipe at, or reject it, we persecute, snipe at, and reject Christ. What a responsibility this lays on us to ensure we do not ourselves, and do not cause others to persecute, snipe at or reject Christ by any lack of witness to the Holy Spirit. Our lives have to bear witness to the fact that we identify with Christ, He is the head, we are the members of His body, within which the Holy Spirit is indwelling.

Now the actual work of mission is extremely simple. Many of us are surprised at the comparatively simplicity of some aspects of the Gospel call, even though whilst being simple they are very demanding, sometimes heroically demanding over a long period of years. Disabilities, illnesses, tragic family circumstances, problems at work and in one's neighbourhood all call for great efforts from us. It's mission work and it's a form of martyrdom as well, in other words a daily round of witness.

In practice there are ways in which we can be helped to support individual and collective works of mercy on the missions. Examples of this is a Parish commitment to support "Let the Children Live", or Seafarers collections, There are many such missionary works some more suited to the individual person and choice.

**"All that I am, all that I do, all that I'll ever have, I offer now to you. Take and sanctify these gifts for your honour, Lord. Knowing that I love and serve you is enough reward. All that I am, all that I do, all that I'll ever have I offer now to you."**

**"All that I dream, all that I pray, all that I'll ever make, I give to you today. Take and sanctify these gifts for your honour, Lord. Knowing that I love and serve you is enough reward.**

**All that I am, all that I do, all that I'll ever have I offer now to you."**

