



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
TO THAILAND AND JAPAN
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HOLY MASS

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS

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Thursday, 21 November 2019

[Multimedia]

“Who is my mother, and who are my brethren?” (Mt 12:48).

With this question, Jesus challenged the crowd of his hearers to reflect on something apparently obvious and self-evident: Who are the members of our family, our relatives and loved ones? After allowing time for the question to sink in, Jesus then replies, “Whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother, sister, and mother” (v. 50). In this way, he subverts not only the religious and legal certitudes of the time, but also every undue claim on the part of those who thought themselves above him. The Gospel is an invitation and a freely bestowed right for all those who want to hear it.

It is surprising to see how full the Gospel is of questions that attempt to unsettle and stir the heart of the disciples, inviting them to *set out* to discover the *truth* that is capable of giving and generating *life*. Questions that challenge us to open our hearts and minds to encounter a newness much more beautiful than we could possibly imagine. The questions of the Master are always meant to renew our lives and those of our communities with incomparable joy (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 11).

Such was the case with the missionaries who first set foot in these lands. By hearing the Lord's word and responding to its demands, they came to realize that they were part of a family much larger than any based on blood lines, cultures, regions or ethnic groups. Impelled by the power of the Spirit, their bags filled with the hope brought by the good news of the Gospel, they set out in search of family members they did not yet know. They set out to seek their faces. Their hearts had to be opened to a new way of thinking capable of overcoming the "adjectives" that create division; this enabled them to discover the many Thai "mothers and brethren" who were still absent from their Sunday table. Not only to share with them everything that they themselves could offer, but also to receive what they needed to grow in their own faith and understanding of the Scriptures (cf. *Dei Verbum*, 8).

Without that encounter, Christianity would have lacked your face. It would have lacked the songs and dances that portray the Thai smile, so typical in your lands. The missionaries came to understand more fully the Father's loving plan, which is not limited to a select few or a specific culture, but is greater than all our human calculations and predictions. A missionary disciple is not a mercenary of the faith or a producer of proselytes, but rather a humble mendicant who feels the absence of brothers, sisters and mothers with whom to share the irrevocable gift of reconciliation that Jesus grants to all. "Behold I have made ready my dinner; go therefore to the streets and invite to the marriage feast as many as you find" (cf. *Mt 22:4.9*). For us, this invitation is a source of joy, gratitude and immense happiness, for it enables us to "let God bring us beyond ourselves in order to attain the fullest truth of our being. Here we find the source and inspiration of all our efforts at evangelization" (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 8).

This year marks the 350th anniversary of the creation of the Apostolic Vicariate of Siam (1669-2019), a sign of the fraternal embrace brought forth in these lands. Two missionaries alone were able to sow the seed that, from that distant time, has grown and flourished in a variety of apostolic initiatives that have contributed to the life of the nation. This anniversary is not a celebration of nostalgia for the past, but a fire of hope to enable us, here and now, to respond with similar determination, strength and confidence. A festive and grateful commemoration that helps us to go forth joyfully to share the new life born of the Gospel with all the members of our family whom we do not yet know.

All of us become missionary disciples when we choose to be a living part of the Lord's family. We do this by sharing with others as he did. He ate with sinners, assuring them that they too had a place at the Father's table and the table of this world; he touched those considered to be unclean and, by letting himself be touched by them, he helped them to realize the closeness of God and to understand that they were blessed (cf. *Ecclesia in Asia*, 11).

Here I think of children and women who are victims of prostitution and human trafficking, humiliated in their essential human dignity. I think of young people enslaved by drug addiction and a lack of meaning that makes them depressed and destroys their dreams. I think of migrants,

deprived of their homes and families, and so many others, who like them can feel orphaned, abandoned, “without the strength, light and consolation born of friendship with Jesus Christ, without a community of faith to support them, without meaning and a goal in life” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 49). I think also of exploited fishermen and bypassed beggars.

All of them are part of our family. They are our mothers, our brothers and sisters. Let us not deprive our communities of seeing their faces, their wounds, their smiles and their lives. Let us not prevent them from experiencing the merciful balm of God’s love that heals their wounds and pains. A missionary disciple knows that evangelization is not about gaining more members or about appearing powerful. Rather, it is about opening doors in order to experience and share the merciful and healing embrace of God the Father, which makes of us one family.

Dear communities of Thailand, let us continue to go forward in the footsteps of the first missionaries, in order to encounter, discover and recognize with joy the faces of all those mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters, whom the Lord wants to give us and who are absent from our Sunday table.