



## **Working for the Kingdom of God**

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My sisters and brothers in Christ,

The message of today's Gospel is about working for the Kingdom of God. We all are called to labor in the 'vineyard of the Lord'. Different times, different talents, different functions, but one mission: to actively work in the building of the Kingdom of God.

The Universal call to Holiness that the 2<sup>nd</sup> Vatican Council presented to us as one of its central messages includes our apostolic mission. Bishops and priest, religious men and women, lay faithful, men and women, young and old, rich and poor, we all are call to participate in the building up of the Kingdom of God.

Our call comes at different times, for some of us early in life, for others later on. It comes in different ways, sometimes forcefully and radically, some other times with the simplicity of an invitation to help out or to get involved in a program or project. But, let me say it again, we all are called because we all are the People of God and the Church is our family.

Let me share with you two examples of people working in the vineyard of the Lord that I have witness these past days.

Yesterday we had the final interment of the remains of a good and faithful priest of the Archdiocese, Msgr. Balty Janacek. He was a priest for 57 years. He entered the seminary after High School and served the people of the Archdiocese until his death in 2007: A long and dedicated life in the service to so many people! He was a blessing for all of us. May he rest in peace.

Then, this past Friday, I had the commissioning Mass for the young men and women working in Campus Ministry and Young Adult Ministry in the Archdiocese. They are good and committed people bringing the good news of the Gospel to our people. They are starting their ministry in the Archdiocese. Thanks be to God!

My sisters and brothers, there is no doubt that we all are already working in the service of God, through our personal commitment to Christ and our ministry in the Church. But, today we should reflect on what it means and how we are doing it.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> reading of today's Mass makes it clear to us. It is about Jesus Christ. St. Paul tells the Philippians: "For me life is Christ" My sisters and brothers our faith is about Jesus Christ. Not just an ideology or a nice humanitarian global cause. Our faith is about the Person and Teachings of one person: Jesus Christ, perfect God and perfect man.

This year, the year of St. Paul, as Pope Benedict says, we have to learn from the experience of St. Paul that “what counts is to place Jesus Christ at the center of our lives, so that our identity is marked essentially by the encounter, by communion with Christ and with his Word.”

So, to work in the ‘vineyard of the Lord’ means to grow, daily if possible, in the knowledge and love of Jesus Christ.

As I wrote in one of my columns, here is a good place to start: commit yourself to reading a few verses from the Gospels each day and a verse or two from one of St. Paul’s letters. Start with the Gospel of Mark and Paul’s Letter to the Philippians. Try to spend a little time each week praying before the Blessed Sacrament, perhaps by getting to Mass a little earlier.

But we are also called to actively work for the building up of the kingdom. We can do it with our example and with our actions.

The Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI gave us a practical advice during his apostolic trip to the United States this past April:

“Dear friends, the example of the saints invites us, then, to consider four essential aspects of the treasure of our faith: personal prayer and silence, liturgical prayer, **charity in action**, and vocations” (Pope Benedict XVI, 4/19/09).

Let me emphasize one of them: ‘**charity in action**’. We have to be active in sharing the beauty of our faith with the people of our time. We are called to make an influence in our society; to get involved in practicing works of mercy.

“We must respond with a renewed social action that stems from the universal love that knows no bounds. In this way, we ensure that our works of mercy and justice become hope in action for others” (Pope Benedict XVI, 4/19/09).

Our time is a time to “renew our apostolic zeal, our missionary call, and become truly apostles of Jesus Christ. For the love of God we have to love our neighbors. We have to show our love in concrete works of mercy—welcoming the immigrant, healing the brokenhearted, raising up the lowly, fighting for the unborn and the family.

As a sign and witness to this culture, I believe we also must renew our appreciation and practice of what our Catholic tradition has called the corporal and spiritual works of mercy.

The *corporal works of mercy* are: to feed the hungry; give drink to the thirsty; clothe the naked; shelter the homeless; visit the sick; visit the imprisoned; and bury the dead. The *spiritual works of mercy* are: to counsel the doubtful; instruct the ignorant; admonish sinners; comfort the afflicted; forgive offenses; bear wrongs patiently; and pray for the living and the dead.

Let us begin our practice of mercy in our homes. Love and mercy must begin in the family. Let us make time to listen, to spend time together, and to try to understand one another. Let us begin to practice forgiveness in all our relationships—as husbands and wives, parents and children, as neighbors and citizens. If we commit ourselves to being people of mercy and love then we can find solutions to every problem in our homes and in our world.

Through our cheerful witness to these works of mercy, let us live among our brothers and sisters as a sign that in Christ all might have mercy, peace, and love in abundance (Jude 2). (Tender Mercy of our God, 34).

Today, once again, Jesus is telling us: "You too go into my vineyard" Let's renew our commitment and work with generosity out of love for God and others.

May Mary, our blessed Mother, continue to intercede for us that through the ministry of music and our charity in action become more and more in love with Jesus Christ, our Savior and Redeemer. Amen.