

Dear Friends of the Oblate Missions and all benefactors.

Christmas 2019

The Lord Jesus said, "Go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Teach them to keep everything I have commanded you. And here I am with you all the days, until the end of the world" (Mt 28: 19).

We look forward to Christmas, coming of Jesus - Prince of Peace to earth again. So, how can we ensure peace on earth when there is so much anxiety, when so many people, including Christians, live in constant fear and concern of losing their lives? A new report of the organization called "*Help the Church in Need*" has been published. Its authors point to the increase in religious persecution in many countries. This is largely the result of the radical Muslim actions. Another problem is the struggle between Shi'ite and Sunni radicals, which also leads to the suffering of followers of other religions. The creators of the analysis also point out the decline in the power of Islamic State. The authors of the report distinguished 3 categories of countries: countries where "persecution" occurs, countries where there is religious "discrimination" and others. The following African countries found themselves in the worst category of "Persecution": Nigeria, Niger, Libya, Sudan, Eritrea, Somalia; as well as Asian: Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Syria, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, China, North Korea, Bangladesh, Myanmar (Burma), Indonesia. In turn, countries with religious "discrimination" include: Mauritania, Algeria and Egypt. On the Asian continent, Turkey, Iran, Ukraine, Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Butan, Laos and Vietnam were distinguished.

According to the authors of the study, serious violations of freedom of conscience occur in 38 countries. That's 19.3 percent of the world's countries. 11 percent of the countries from around the globe (21 countries) went to the "persecuted" group, and 9 percent (17 countries) to the "Discriminated" group. Among the countries in the categories 'Discrimination' and 'Harassment', the situation deteriorated in 18 countries (47.5 percent of the total), and in the next 18 remained unchanged.

Why missions?

Because to us, like to Saint Paul, "this grace was given: to declare to the Gentiles the unfathomable wealth of Christ" (Eph 3: 8). The newness of life in Him is the "good news" for man of all time: to it all people were called and destined. In fact, everyone is looking for it, although sometimes in a vague way, and everyone has the right to know the value of this gift and accept it. The Church, and every Christian in her, cannot hide or preserve for themselves this newness and this wealth, received from God's goodness, to pass it on to all people. This is why missionary activity arises not only from the Lord's formal command, but also from the deep requirements of God's life in us (...). (*John Paul II, Redemptoris missio, n. 11 / opoka.org.pl*).

Are the needs of human happiness today different from those that people had in times of St. Paul?

In the same document St. John Paul II warns us Christians that: "Today's temptation is to reduce Christianity to purely human wisdom, as if to know how to live well. In a highly secularized world, there has been a gradual secularization of salvation, which is why there is a battle for a person, but for a reduced person, reduced only to the horizontal dimension. We, however, know that Jesus came to bring total salvation, which embraces all people, opening them to the wonderful horizons of becoming God's children. Therefore, a person who satisfies only his routine needs will not experience true happiness

"A Christian always goes to other people and never owes the recognition of others" – Pope Francis

So, how do we live in the times that - we can all admit - are one of the most difficult in Christian history? How can we proclaim Christ and His Good News today? How to reach a person today to cover in teaching all his needs; to bring him/her total salvation, covering the whole his/her being, according to the teaching of St. John Paul II?

In a sermon delivered on the occasion of the Extraordinary Missionary Month in October this year, Pope Francis calls on all the baptized to believe that: (...) "Each of us **has** a mission, each of us **is** a mission in this world - our life is a valuable mission - it is not a burden to bear, but a gift to offer. " Using the comparison to mountain climbing, the Pope teaches that: just like in the mountains you cannot climb, being laden with things, likewise in a Christian - spiritual life - we need to get rid of what is unessential. this is also the secret of the mission: to head out, one must leave, to preach, one must sacrifice (...). Only then will we be able, as the Pope says, to fulfill our mission, that is: "to give clean, high-mountain air to those who live immersed in world pollution, bring to earth peace that fills us with joy every time we meet Jesus.

In gratitude for all you do to support the Oblate Missions in the world and on behalf of all the Missionary Oblates, I wish you a Mary and blessed Christmas! May the Child Jesus - the Prince of Peace visit the hearts of the leaders of countries, various religions, and above all - Christians, in our families and in the hearts of every person of good will! With the gift of prayer at the manger of our Lord and God,

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