



DIOCESE of ERIE
Sharing the Catholic faith in northwest Pennsylvania

Homily Helps – October 18, 2026

29th Sunday in Ordinary Time. World Mission Sunday

There are some words that we hear and quickly forget: a slogan, a campaign promise, an advertisement. Even kind words can sometimes evaporate almost as soon as they are spoken. And then there are words that somehow change the course of a life, especially if we are open to a change, a conversion even.

A doctor says, “The tests came back clear.” A spouse says, “I love you.” A priest says, “I baptize you...” Words like these can communicate something powerful. And in the case of the sacraments, the words of the priest do not merely describe something. They actually bring about a new reality. In baptism, those simple words wash away sin and death and make someone a child of God and a member of the Body of Christ.

That is the kind of language St. Paul uses in today’s second reading when he speaks about the Gospel. Writing to the first Christians in Thessalonica, he says: “Our Gospel did not come to you in word alone, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit.” Not in word alone. But in power.

Paul knew the difference firsthand. When he first arrived in Thessalonica, he did not come with wealth, political influence, or military force. He came simply preaching Jesus Christ crucified and risen. Yet somehow that message took hold. Lives changed. A formerly fully pagan city became home to a vibrant Christian community. And from there the Gospel spread outward to the rest of Europe.

That is the story of Christianity from the beginning: the Gospel taking root in human hearts and becoming something lived, something visible, something powerful. And that is still how the Church grows today.

In every generation, the Gospel moves forward because someone carries it. Someone teaches it, lives it, suffers for it, shares it, hands it on. Sometimes that happens in dramatic ways. A missionary priest travels to a remote village. A religious sister builds a school or cares for the sick. A catechist quietly teaches the faith under difficult circumstances.

But often the Gospel spreads in much quieter ways. A parent teaches a child to pray. A family remains faithful during hardship. Someone forgives instead of retaliating. A young person says yes to a vocation. A Christian quietly lives with integrity in a world that often rewards the opposite. Again and again, the Gospel becomes more than words. It becomes power. And it changes and transforms lives.

That is part of what we celebrate on World Mission Sunday. Today the Church reminds us that the mission of Christ extends far beyond our own parish or neighborhood. At this very moment, throughout the world, the Gospel is being preached in poor villages, crowded cities, refugee camps, mission territories, hospitals, schools, and prisons. In some places, the Church is flourishing. In others, she survives under persecution, poverty, or violence. Yet the same Gospel continues to move from heart to heart, culture to culture, generation to generation. And the remarkable thing is this: God chooses to work through ordinary people.



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Here in the Diocese of Erie, we have a particularly beautiful example of what that missionary spirit can look like. This year marks the 55th anniversary of our Mission of Friendship, a relationship that has connected the people of our diocese with our brothers and sisters in the Diocese of Yucatán, Mexico, for more than half a century. Generations of people from northwestern Pennsylvania have prayed, served, given and formed friendships across borders. What began as a missionary relationship has become something deeper: a reminder that the Church truly is one family and that mission is not simply about what we give to others. It is also about what we receive from one another through faith, friendship and the encounter with Christ.

The first reading gives us a surprising example of this. The prophet Isaiah speaks about Cyrus, the king of Persia. Cyrus was not an Israelite. Yet God still used him for his purposes. Through him, the Jewish people were allowed to return from exile and rebuild their lives. It is a reminder that God's providence is always larger than we imagine. God is at work in places we do not expect, and through people we might never anticipate.

The Gospel reading brings everything into sharpest focus. Jesus says, "Repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God." And if these ancient coins once bore Caesar's image, then every baptized Christian bears the image of Christ. We belong to him, which means faith cannot remain something private or passive. The Gospel is meant to move through us into the world. The question is not only whether we believe the Gospel, but whether others can see its power at work in us—through our choices, our sacrifices, our compassion, and our witness.

Today, on World Mission Sunday, the Church asks us not only to admire the missionary work of others but to participate in it ourselves. Through our prayers, through sacrifices offered in union with the missions, and through our financial support of the Church's missionary work, we help carry the Gospel into places we may never personally see.

For us in the Diocese of Erie, World Mission Sunday is therefore not something distant. Mission is already part of our story. For 55 years, the Mission of Friendship has reminded us that the universal Church reaches all the way to our own parishes and communities, inviting each of us to look beyond ourselves and recognize Christ in our brothers and sisters throughout the world.

In God's providence, even the smallest act of generosity can help bring Christ's light to another corner of the world. And so may the Gospel we hear today become not merely a matter of words, but of power — alive in us, and through us, for the salvation of the world.