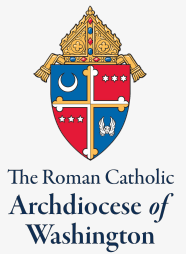


Homilies



October 4, 2026

27th Sunday in Ordinary Time. Two weeks before World Mission Sunday.

We live in a culture that constantly seems to measure people. Who is successful? Who is attractive? Who is useful? Who matters? And very often, the people who do not seem strong, productive, or desirable are pushed to the margins. Into that kind of world, Jesus speaks these startling words: "The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone."

History shows us how dangerous it can become when a society begins deciding that some lives matter less than others. The twentieth century gave a horrifying example of that. In Nazi Germany, the disabled, the mentally ill, and others considered "unproductive" were labeled burdens on society. Many were sterilized; others were killed. What began with the vulnerable eventually expanded into a machinery of death that consumed six million Jews and another six million other innocent souls.

One of the few leaders who publicly challenged those policies was Bishop Clemens von Galen of Munster. In a series of sermons in 1941, he condemned the Nazi euthanasia program and warned that once the state claimed the right to decide which lives were valuable and which were not, no one would ultimately be safe. He spoke especially about the disabled, the elderly, and the helpless, insisting that every human life possesses God-given dignity.

Von Galen's words spread throughout Germany and even beyond, deeply embarrassing the Nazi regime. Some officials urged Hitler to have him arrested or executed, but they feared turning him into a martyr while the war continued. Although this brave bishop could not stop the evil that was unfolding, he remains one of the clearest Christian witnesses against the culture of death that had overtaken Nazi Germany.

Again and again, the Scriptures reveal a God who draws especially close to the vulnerable: the widow, the orphan, the stranger, the outcast. Not because their lives matter more than others, but because society so often treats them as though their lives matter less.

Throughout the Gospels, we find Jesus befriending and identifying himself with the rejected, the forgotten, and the burdensome. And then Jesus himself becomes the rejected one. The crucified one is cast aside by the world, deemed expendable, put out of sight. Yet precisely there, God reveals his glory. "The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone."

That teaching continues to challenge us today. It should shape how we see the unborn, the elderly, the disabled, the migrant, the prisoner, and even the difficult person who tests our patience. A Christian does not ask first: "What does this person contribute?" A Christian asks: "How is Christ present in this man, this woman, this child?"

This teaching also says something about ourselves. Our value does not come from success, beauty, or status. Our dignity comes from this alone: we are made in the image of God. Which means that even in moments when we feel overlooked, forgotten, or inadequate, God has not abandoned us. Very often, it is precisely there, in weakness and vulnerability, that Christ draws closest.

Perhaps that is why the Church celebrates World Mission Sunday each year on the second-to-last Sunday in October. The Church's mission is not simply humanitarian work or the spread of ideas. The mission of the Church is to bring people to a living encounter with Jesus Christ. It is to proclaim that every human life has dignity because every human person is made in God's image and likeness, and it is this same God's will that all come to know Christ, his son, and find redemption and new life in his Body and Blood.

In many parts of the world, people live with poverty, violence, persecution, loneliness, or despair. But there is also another kind of poverty: never having heard that they are loved by God, never having encountered the hope of the Gospel, never having experienced the grace of the sacraments as celebrated by the Church.

Through our prayers, sacrifices, and financial support on World Mission Sunday, we help missionaries bring that message to the world. We help build churches, support schools and hospitals, form seminarians and catechists, and most importantly, help others come to know Jesus Christ. The rejected stone has become the cornerstone, and the Church's mission is to help the whole world discover in him the foundation of hope and new life.

October 11, 2026

28th Sunday in Ordinary Time. One week before World Mission Sunday.

Weddings are supposed to be joyful occasions. People gather with family and friends. There is music, celebration, food, laughter, and hope for the future for the bride and groom. And yet Jesus tells a wedding parable that turns dark almost immediately. The guests refuse to come. Others become violent and kill the servants sent to invite them. By the end of the story, a city is in flames and another guest is cast out into the darkness. It is one of the strangest and most unsettling parables Jesus ever tells.

Perhaps that is because the parable is not really just about a wedding feast. It is about God's invitation to humanity. The king represents God the Father, and the banquet is the joy of communion with his Son. Again and again, God calls people not simply to perform religious duties, but to enter into a relationship of life and love with his Son. Yet so often the invitation is ignored, resisted, or pushed aside. Matthew's parable presents us with a world that feels painfully familiar — a world that keeps turning away from the very One who alone can give it life.

The prophet Isaiah describes this condition as "the veil that veils all peoples, the web that is woven over all nations." Human beings long for joy, peace, meaning, and love, yet we become trapped in selfishness, division, fear, and sin. We search for fulfillment in so many places, but our hearts remain restless. Beneath much of the sadness and confusion of the world is the tragedy that people do not yet know Christ, or no longer recognize him as the source of life.

But the striking thing in the parable is that the king does not give up. Again and again, he sends servants out into the streets, continuing to invite people to the feast. That persistence tells us something important about God. God never stops seeking us. He never stops desiring that people come to know his Son and share in his life. And the Father loves so much that he even sends his own Son, who ultimately gives his life so that we might have salvation and eternal life with the Father through him.

Every Mass is a foretaste of that banquet that we hope to come to in heaven. Each Sunday, in the midst of a wounded and divided world, Christ gathers us around his table and feeds us with himself. Beneath the ordinary signs of bread and wine, the risen Lord gives us his own life, which gives us the grace and the strength to live as he calls us to live.

And yet Matthew's parable includes that unsettling image of the guest without a wedding garment. In Scripture, clothing often symbolizes the condition of the heart. St. Paul speaks of clothing ourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, patience, and above all, love. If the banquet represents life in Christ, then love is the garment we are meant to wear. It is not enough simply to accept the invitation outwardly. Christ desires gradually to transform us inwardly.

That is not easy. It is often much easier to remain resentful, indifferent, or even cynical. Yet the closer we draw to Christ, the more he teaches us how to love. The good news is that God himself provides what he asks of us. As St. Paul says today, "My God will fully supply whatever you need, in accord with his glorious riches in Christ Jesus." We come to the banquet unworthy and unprepared, but Christ slowly clothes us with his grace.

And that gift is never meant to remain only with us. Next Sunday, the Church celebrates World Mission Sunday. At the heart of the Church's mission is the same invitation we hear in today's Gospel: Come to the feast. Come and know Christ. Come and discover the life only he can give.

There are still many people in the world who have never truly encountered Jesus Christ or heard the Gospel proclaimed in a meaningful way. Through our prayers, sacrifices, and generosity, we help the Church continue sending servants into the streets — helping missionaries preach the Gospel, celebrate the sacraments, care for the poor, and invite others into the joy of Christ's Kingdom. The invitation continues to go out, and every one of us is called not only to accept it, but also to help others hear it.

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.

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. 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.

October 25, 2026

30th Sunday in Ordinary Time. Week following World Mission Sunday.

Have you ever met someone whose enthusiasm was simply contagious? Perhaps it was a teacher who loved the subject she taught, a coach who inspired a team, or a friend who was so passionate about a hobby that before long everyone around him became interested too. Enthusiasm has a way of spreading. We are naturally drawn to people who believe deeply in something and whose lives reflect that conviction.

That is precisely what St. Paul sees in the Christians of Thessalonica. They were not famous because they were numerous or influential. Thessalonica was a bustling port city, and the Christians there were a relatively small minority. Yet Paul tells them that their faith had become

known throughout the surrounding region. People were talking about them everywhere he went. Why? Because their faith was contagious.

Paul tells us the Christians here had “turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God”; Their encounter with Christ had changed them and embraced the Gospel with conviction. They remained faithful even in the midst of difficulties and opposition. Their faith was not something they practiced for an hour each week. It shaped the whole of their lives. As a result, they became what Paul calls “models”; for other believers. Their lives were a kind of living sermon. People could look at them and see what Christianity looked like in practice. I wonder if the same could be said of us.

Some Catholics today can be hesitant to speak openly about their faith. We live in a culture where religious belief is often regarded as a private matter. In some circles, Christian faith is viewed with indifference; in others, it is met with suspicion or even hostility. It can seem easier to keep our beliefs to ourselves, to blend in rather than stand out. Yet the Christians of Thessalonica did not hide their faith. While they did not seek attention for themselves, their faith was so genuine and so visible in the way they lived that others could not help but notice it. They were enthusiastic believers.

The word “enthusiasm”; comes from a Greek word that literally means “God within”; In the ancient world, when someone displayed extraordinary zeal or joy, people assumed that a god had taken possession of them. For Christians, that image took on a deeper meaning. Through their baptism and confirmation, the Thessalonians had become dwelling places of the Holy Spirit. They knew that they belonged to Christ who had delivered them from a life centered on false gods and empty promises. They had discovered the joy of serving the living and true God. And that joy overflowed into their daily lives. And the faith spread. That is how the Church has always grown.

The Church did not spread throughout the Roman Empire because Christians possessed wealth, or political power. It spread because ordinary believers lived differently and their love attracted others to Christ. People saw something in them that they wanted for themselves. The same remains true today.

The most effective evangelization begins with Christians whose lives reflect the presence of Jesus. A generous family. A parishioner who quietly serves others. A young person who lives the faith with joy. A believer who remains hopeful in difficult circumstances. These are the witnesses through whom the Gospel continues to spread. And that brings us to this month of October, which the Church dedicates in a special way to the missions.

When we hear the word “missionary”; we often think of a priest, sister, or lay volunteer serving in a distant country. Certainly, they deserve our prayers and support. But missionary work belongs to the whole Church. Every baptized person is called to share in Christ’s mission, each in our own way. Earlier this year, Pope Leo reminded the Church that the Pontifical Mission Societies are one of the principal ways that all Catholics can participate in that mission. Most of us will never travel across the world as missionaries. Yet through our prayers, our sacrifices, and our generosity, we can help bring the Gospel to places where the Church is still young and growing. Just last month, the Church celebrated in St. Louis, Missouri the beatification of Archbishop Fulton Sheen, one of the great missionary figures in American Catholic history. Although he is remembered for his radio and television ministry, Bishop Sheen spent decades promoting and supporting the Church’s missionary work throughout the world. He often reminded Catholics that we are not only responsible for our own parish or our diocese, but for the spread of the Gospel to every people and every land.

The Christians of Thessalonica allowed their faith to ring out across an entire region. Blessed Fulton Sheen challenged American Catholics to do the same. May our faith ring out through the witness of our lives, and may our prayers and support of the Church’s missionary work help others come to know and serve the living and true God.