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Missionary Prayer Intention - The Pope's Missionary Prayer Intention for February 2006: For lay Catholics in mission lands: may they serve their country with ever greater commitment in every field including politics and social assistance
Comment by Archbishop Nicholas Cheong Jinsuk Archbishop of Seoul

Rome (Fides Service) - The Church in mission lands is faced with a double challenge, namely to proclaim the Gospel to over two thirds of the world' s six billion people who live without yet knowing or recognising Jesus Christ, on the one hand, and to transform the temporal order through the Gospel values, on the other. Such a transformation constitutes "a very special form of evangelisation" (Evangelii Nuntiandi, 70), which paves the way for the integral human development as well as for the first proclamation of the Gospel.
In mission lands such an evangelising activity becomes more imperative. Human life there has increasingly been threatened by abject poverty, tragic mismanagement of available scarce resources, political instability and social disorientation. How in fact can one proclaim the new commandment of love in those immense lands without promoting in justice and peace the true, authentic advancement of man!
Needless to say, it is the laity who should play an essential and irreplaceable role in this evangelising activity. And in a world controlled by rich and powerful nations as it is today, the lay faithful in these nations should also join hands in this evangelising activity. It is in this field that the lay faithful are called by God to live the Gospel and sanctify themselves by serving the human person and society in communion with all the People of God. In this way, their temporal activity openly bears witness to Christ and promotes the salvation of men and women, thereby rendering a primary service to their nation. Unfortunately, however, it seems that the Christian animation of the temporal order has not been a primary concern among the lay faithful in many parts of mission lands. Most of them tend to turn away from their vocation in the world and from socio-political life for fear they should be contaminated by corruption of the affairs of the world, while most of those who participate in it scarcely recognise their Christian identity. There exists a new type of flight from the world, namely the temptation to confine the tasks of the laity within the Church. In fact, while there has been a noticeable growth in the commitment of lay Catholics in the internal mission of the Church, a commitment to the mission outside the Church is less evidenced. They are inclined to think that their disengagement from responsibilities in the world can be justified by their engagement in inner Church life.
As politics plays a crucial part in the renewal of the temporal order, we need to encourage and support those who are suited or can become suited to prepare themselves for "the difficult, but at the same time, the very noble art of politics" (Gaudium et Spes, 75) and seek to practice this art with integrity and wisdom, "dedicating themselves to the service of all with sincerity and fairness, indeed, with the charity and fortitude demanded by political life" (Ibid,). One of the challenges facing the Church today is to help Catholic politicians "be aware of their Christian identity and of the universal moral values that are based in the nature of man, in such a way that, in virtue of a correct conscience, they commit themselves to applying [the values] to civil law, to build a coexistence that respects man in all his dimensions" (Benedict XVI, Discourse to the Polish Bishops, 17 December 2005).
Great care must be taken, therefore, about formation in the social doctrine of the Church, will not only alert the faithful engaged in the socio-political sphere to their duty, but will also give them concrete guidelines for action in favour of the renewal of the temporal order. It is essential that they should have a firm grasp of this teaching and make it an integral part of their evangelising mission. We need to adequately form lay men and women with responsibilities in public life in this teaching so that they can inspire and vivify secular society and its structures with the "Gospel of Peace", thereby inspiring a "civilisation of peace" (Benedict XVI, Message for the World Day of Peace, 1 January 2006) in mission lands and in the whole world always in broad cooperation with all men and women of good will.

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We need to wake up long dormant laity and adequately form them "as evangelisers able to face the challenges of the contemporary world, not just with worldly wisdom and efficiency, but with hearts renewed and strengthened by the truth of Christ" (Ecclesia in Asia, 45). The more Gospel-inspired lay people there are engaged in the Christian animation of the temporal realities, the more these realities will be at the service of the kingdom of God and therefore of salvation in Jesus Christ, benefiting all the people. "Through them the Church of Christ is made present In the various sectors of the world, as a sign and source of hope and of love" (Christifideles Laici, 7).
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