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VATICAN - The Pope's Angelus on Mission Sunday: "Mission starts from the heart: when we stop to pray in front of the Crucifx, and we see that pierced side, we cannot fail to be filled with joy at the knowledge that we are loved and with a desire to love and be channels of mercy and reconciliation" - Appeal for Iraq

Vatican City (Agenzia Fides) - World Mission Sunday was the focus of Pope Pope Benedict XVI's address before the midday Angelus prayer on Sunday 23 October. Here is what the Pope said.

"Today we are celebrating the 80th World Mission Sunday. The Day was instituted by Pope Pius XI who gave new impulse to mission ad gentes, promting during the Holy Year of 1925 a marvellous exhibition known today as the Ethnological-Missionary Collection in the Vatican Museums. This year, in the traditional Message for the recurrence, I proposed the theme "Charity, Soul of Mission". In fact unless Mission is animated by love, it is merely philanthropic/social ativity. For Christians the words of Paul hold true: "Love of Christ urges us on" (2 Cor 5,14). The same charity that moved the Father to send His Son into the world, and the Son to offer himself for us even to death on the cross, this same charity is poured into the hearts of beleivers by the Holy Spirit. Every baptised person, like the branch united with the vine, can in this way cooperate in the mission of Jesus, which we can sum up as follows: to carry to every person the good news that "God is Love" and, precisely for this reason, He wishes the whole world to be saved.

Mission starts from the heart: when we stop to pray in front of the Crucifx, and we see that pierced side, we cannot fail to be filled with joy at the knowledge that we are loved and the desire to love and be channels of mercy and reconciliation. This happened to the young Francis of Assisi, exactly 800 years ago, in the little church of Saint Damiano, then in ruins. From that Crucifix, now preserved in the Basilica of Santa Chiara, Francis heard Jesus say: "Go, repair my house, see it is in ruins!" That "house" was first of all Francis' own life in need of "repair" with authentic conversion; it was the Church, not built of bricks, but of living persons, always in need of purification; it was also the whole of humanity among whom God longs to dwell. Mission always starts from a heart transformed by the love of God, as is witnessed by countless saints and martyrs, who in different ways have spent their lives at the service of the Gospel.

Mission is therefore a workshop and there is a job for everyone: for those who strive to build the Kingdom of God in the family; for those who live a professional occupation with the Christian spirit; for those totally consecrated to the Lord; for those who follow Jesus the Good Shepherd in the ordained ministry to the People of God; for those specifically destined to proclaiming Christ to all who do not know Him. May Mary Most Holy help us live, each in the situation in which Divine Providence has placed us, the joy and courage of mission."

After leading the prayer and impparting his Blessing, the Pope greeted Muslims all over the world celebrating the end of the Ramadan month of fasting and he called attention to the "grave situation of insecurity and brutal violence" in Iraq, "to which many innocent people simply because they are Shiite or Sunni Muslims or Christians are exposed". "I am aware of the deep concern of the Christian community in Iraq- Pope Pope Benedict XVI said - and wish to affirm my closeness to them and to all the victims and I pray for strength and consolation for all. I urge you to join my prayer to Almighty God that He may grant the faith and necessary courage to religious and political leaders, in Iraq and in the rest of the world, to sustain this people on the path of national reconstruction, and the search for shared balances, reciprocal respect, aware that the multiplicity of its components is its richness". (S.L.) (Agenzia Fides 23/10/2006 - righe 42, parole 622)

> LINKS

See the Pope's address: http://www.evangelizatio.org/portale/adgentes/pontefici/pontefice.php?id=625:

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