**Homily at the P.M.S. Asia Continental Meeting**
*Taipei, 10.02.2019*

Dear brothers and sisters,

I am glad to be celebrating this Holy Mass with you today. I am accompanying the group of National Directors of the Pontifical Mission Societies in Asia. What are the Pontifical Mission Societies? They are a worldwide network at the service of the Holy Father to support the mission and the young Churches through prayer and charity. They are meant to be a way in which every Christian can help sustain the mission and thus help our brothers and sisters spread throughout the world. The PMS do not simply offer financial aid. Their task is also that of reminding all the faithful that we can sustain the mission first and foremost through our prayer and testimony of faith. This week, the National Directors of the PMS in Asia are gathered here in Taiwan to reflect on how we can better help the Churches in Asia to become missionary.

Today we have heard the Word of God that can greatly inspire our lives as Christians. I believe that we can highlight three points: Gods calls us regardless of our own personal merit; God calls us to be apostles; the message that we bring is the very heart of our faith, the proclamation of the death and resurrection of Jesus.

First of all: God calls us. In the first reading and in the Gospel we see that it is God who calls. The prophet Isaiah has a great vision of God and of angels, and he experiences his own nothingness. And yet, God touches his lips and sends him out to be His herald. In the Gospel, the apostle Saint Peter lives first-hand the miraculous catch of fish worked by Jesus, and he experiences his own limits: I am a sinner, how can I be chosen by God to be apostle? Nevertheless, Jesus chooses and sends him. This is a great truth even for us today. It is true that we are all sinners, and it is important that we recognize ourselves as such. But God does not look only and primarily at our sinfulness, because God wants to save us. God seeks us, because He loves us and does not consider our merits but the good projects He wants to carry out with us. This is also a great sign for a country like this. It was God’s will to come to you through the work of the missionaries, even in relatively recent times, because God desires to give His life, His forgiveness, His Holy Spirit to all. We should never fear God or think that we are too far from Him. It is true: we are far, but He seeks us and comes to meet us. The fact that the call comes from God reminds us of another important truth: we are Christians not because we are better than others, but because God has called us to be Christians. Pope Francis always stresses that the initiative is God’s: He comes, acts, and calls first. But His call does not stop in us, it goes beyond.

This is the second point of my reflection: God calls us to become apostles. God calls us to Himself to send us to others. The faith is not something exclusive that we live for ourselves, closed in our little world. Rather, the faith opens us to our brothers and sisters to whom we are sent. We are called to be Christians in order to be apostles. And what does it mean for us to be apostles? First of all, it means to be witnesses of our faith in our everyday life. Especially in a country like yours, where there are few Christians, it is necessary that you be witnesses of your faith. Not because we are better than others: on the contrary, we have seen that God calls without considering our personal merit. We are called to be witnesses so that even today God may continue to call people to Himself, so that others may discover the mercy and the forgiveness of God, so that others may know that they have a Father who is in heaven. God called men time ago, because His Son was present among us. How can He call today? Through us Christians, that is, those who carry the name of His Son Jesus Christ. No one can believe by himself, but we all believe together. In this way, we become witnesses before the world, so that the world may “believe in the One whom the Father has sent” (Jn 6:29). Without our testimony, the Gospel would be mute. Without our testimony, the Gospel could not continue to manifest that God loves man.

In fact, this is our message, the message of which we are heralds: God loves man. And this is my last point. You have heard very well what Saint Paul said in the second reading, “I handed on to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins”; He died and rose from the dead to cancel our sins. God so loved man, that He sent His only Son to die for us. He did this, because He wanted us to be His children.

This fact of the death and resurrection of Jesus, which we repeat every Sunday in the Creed, is the heart of the Church’s message. We also repeat it in every Eucharistic celebration, after the consecration. The priest says: “Mystery of faith”, and we answer: “We proclaim your Death, O Lord, and profess your Resurrection until you come again”. In the very heart of the Eucharistic celebration, we proclaim the heart of the Christian faith. Let us never forget this: what makes us Christians is the call of God to believe that in his Son Jesus, who died and rose from the dead, we can find the forgiveness of ours sins and the beginning of a new life, just like St. Peter in the Gospel. This is the great miracle of our faith: Jesus died and rose for us all.

We celebrate this miracle in every Eucharistic celebration. This is the reason why we repeat the words of Jesus at the Last Supper: “This is my body and this is my blood, which is given up for you”. We too can receive Him, so that Christ my rise even in us and give us new life. Today we are above all grateful to God for renewing this miracle. It is true: we are not worthy. But it is even more true that God wants to accomplish this miracle for us and for our salvation. Amen.