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Société des Missions Africaines

S.M.A.

Society of African Missions



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Happy In Mission *Fr. Daniel Lee, SMA Associate*

Greetings to All SMA Fathers, Brothers and Sisters and Readers! I am really happy to greet you all again from Tanzania. How are you? I am doing well and getting familiar with missionary life here. When I first arrived two years ago, I struggled with the hot weather, unfamiliar foods and language, especially Swahili (the official language of Tanzania). From time to time, I was lonely, because I was the only Korean S.M.A. Associate priest here in this mission. Actually, there are no Koreans (that I have come across) in Tanzania. I think this helped me to reach out to my Tanzanian brothers and sisters. Now I find that I am not lonely; I like Tanzanian food; and I can express myself in Kiswahili. Lately, I am enjoying playing baseball with the altar boys. You know how baseball rules are quite complicated—well, I taught them the rules in Swahili!

Actually, life in the missions can be tiring. Mass with the people in an outstation takes about two hours--Tanzanians really like singing and dancing during the Mass. After Mass, I am completely drenched (perspiration). It is very hot at the outstations. Village food is generously offered (not so clean or nutritious). I drink rain water

(after boiling) in the parish. When the dry season comes, there is no rain water for drinking, so I have to buy some water from town every week.

When I celebrate Mass with the people, I feel their great happiness and gratitude. Through their happiness, I become happy. If I speak in poor Swahili, the people laugh and I laugh also. I love their beautiful smiles, and I really can't help myself smiling in return.



Above: Fr. Daniel Lee with children.

When I was in Tenafly, I spoke to the People at the Mission who participated in the last Mass before I left for Tanzania saying, "I really want to be a happy priest. That's why I became an S.M.A. Associate Priest. I will try to be a happy missionary in Tanzania."

I can honestly say, I am happy to be here with the people and be a missionary in Tanzania.

Tumshukuru Mungu! (in Swahili
'We thank God!')

The Call To Discipleship

The Gospel of Matthew in Matt. 4:18-22, with the help of some biblical commentaries on this passage, offers us the paradigm of Jesus' call to discipleship which can serve as a guide for anyone seeking to follow Jesus. Of course, some adjustments have to be made to fit our present circumstances. Nonetheless, Matthew offers us many helpful and valuable insights.

Soon after the arrest of John the Baptist in Nazareth, Jesus moved to Capernaum in Galilee because of "the danger Jesus faced by ministering there." In addition, "for Matthew, the reason for Jesus' relocation is to fulfill Scripture. He adapts an oracle from the prophet Isaiah (9:1-2)." Another important reason for Jesus' move is that "Capernaum was a fishing village at the northwest corner of the Sea of Galilee. It lay along an important trade route, the Via Maris, 'the Way of the Sea.' This would have ensured a greater audience for his ministry than the tiny village of Nazareth." Here, "there is a foreshadowing of the expansion of Jesus' mission to the

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The Call To Discipleship

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Gentiles,” while originally “the Matthean Jesus stresses at the outset that his mission is only to Israel.” It is in Galilee that Jesus begins his public ministry.

Matthew introduces key characteristics of discipleship which may help us reflect on our own response to Jesus. First, “the invitation is initiated by Jesus. Unlike disciples of rabbis, who would seek out the one with whom they wanted to study, these disciples of Jesus are invited by him. They are going about their everyday work, casting their nets into the sea and making repairs to them, when Jesus encounters them at the seaside.”

The question might be asked, how is our following of Jesus a response to his invitation?

“Far from being ‘uneducated, ordinary men,’ as the polemic reference to Peter and John in Acts (4:13) states, these fishermen were savvy businessmen who managed employees (Mark 1:20) and located their industry in an advantageous tax district.” “The expression in the Acts of the Apostles ‘uneducated and common men’ should not be taken too literally. Fishing was a major industry on the Sea of Galilee, and the first disciples owned the equipment necessary (nets and boats) to take part in this kind of work. There is no reason to assume that they were illiterate.” Jesus was clever in calling people who were competent in their profession as fishermen and asking that they use that same skill in “fishing for people.” Perhaps we need to respond, not by giving up what we’re skilled in, but

translating it in a way that will best serve in our ministry of following Jesus, as the first disciples did.

In following Jesus, “discipleship does not entail merely intellectual assent, but following Jesus in every respect.” “There is a stress on the totality and immediacy of the response of these first disciples. The radical changes that the life of discipleship demands are symbolized in the leaving of their nets, their boat, and their father.” The early disciples “were leaving behind a secure and stable lifestyle.” **What holds us back from radically following Jesus?**

Jesus “summoned people who apparently had no previous interest in him” yet they responded immediately to him. They may have met him briefly once or twice before. Some have written that “if we do not answer him ‘immediately’ he may continue on his way and we could lose sight of him.” We need to be aware and awake like the disciples when “Christ called them in the midst of their ordinary work.” **What does it take to follow Jesus while scarcely knowing him?** It was also “the authoritative nature of Jesus’ person and his word which was able to inspire total allegiance.” The immediate responses of the disciples “highlight the attractiveness and persuasiveness of Jesus.” This suggests that in order to follow Jesus today, we need to get to know “the authoritative nature of Jesus’ person” and his persuasiveness” and “attractiveness.” Not seeing Jesus directly, as the disciples did, may make it more



Above: Fr. Daniel Lee administers the Sacrament of Penance.

difficult for us. **However, we can encounter him and experience him through prayer, pondering his word in Scripture, and getting to know him through others and the activities they carry out in Jesus’ name.**

Intimacy with Jesus is invaluable for knowing and responding to him. Still, we must remember that the early disciples “apparently had no interest in him” but soon trusted in him to leave all. Jesus’ disciples responded to his “preaching, teaching, and healing” as he went about performing these activities and many miracles among the diverse peoples of Capernaum. **Do we see examples of this which would draw us to follow him?**

These are a few questions for reflection on what motivated Jesus’ early disciples to follow him. A prayerful and thoughtful reading of Matthew’s account of the calling of his first disciples may serve as a guide as it informs our own contemporary experience in following the footsteps of Jesus.