

THE GREAT OBLIGATION OF EVANGELIZATION

FR. MARTIN CHITTADIYIL V.C.

He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation” (Mk 16:15).

St. Joseph Freinademetz (1852-1908) was one of the greatest missionaries in China. From Europe he went to China, learned the Chinese language and imbibed the Chinese culture and took the Chinese name “Fu Shenfu” which means “joy”. Initially he felt every strange and unusual. In one letter he wrote about the food habits of people there with some kind of wonder. The Chinese eat rice; all the time rice! Even when on their deathbed they eat rice. But in a few days’ time everything became normal for Fr. Joseph Freinademetz. Then he wrote: “Now I feel that rice and fish curry is as good as our food.”

The Chinese were not willing to accept the foreigners that easily. Often, they showed reluctance and even hatred to even talk to the foreigners. From his experience, Fr. Joseph Freinademetz wrote: “Missionaries are always foreigners. They are long-nosed devils from Europe. One aged missionary once told me, ‘Many people hate missionaries. Some people just tolerate them. But nobody loves a missionary.’” But Fr. Joseph Freinademetz did not flee from the place where he did not get any love. He managed to live there. He contemplated about the love of Christ. He loved everyone, even those who did not love him. He worked as a missionary in China for long years. Finally, he died there because of typhus fever. When he went there, the number of Christians was just 158. But when he died the Christian community had swelled to the figure of 45,000. Preaching the Gospel is a mission that Jesus has entrusted to all the believers.

Each follower of Christ is called upon to become a missionary. When we live with faith, purity and fidelity as per our call and mission, through our life we will be able to preach the Gospel and gain souls for Jesus. What is nobler

than gaining souls? St. Francis Xavier had realised this and that is why because of he prayed to God like this: “Give me souls. You can take all the rest.” St. Paul has written, “When I preach the gospel, I cannot boast, since I am compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!” (1 Cor 9:16).

I remember the lines of a poem I read some time ago. It said, “The gospel of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, Your neighbours may not read. Your lie is the only Gospel they may ever read.”

“Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season” (2 Tim 4:2).

“Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life” (Rev 2:10).