

**A LETTER FROM BISHOP JOSAPHAT MOSHCHYCH
HEAD OF THE UGCC COUNCIL FOR EVANGELIZATION
ON MISSION DAYS 2016**

Reverend and Dear Fathers,

I write to you and humbly invite you to read through this explanation of Mission Days, which we annually hold in our Church, especially in our parish communities, in response to an appeal from the Synod of Bishops of our Church: to recommit ourselves to sharing our faith with others and to support the missionary activity of Church thorough prayer and a special donation.

What is the purpose of Mission Days?

I think that any pastor seeks ways to ensure that his parish is truly vibrant, that his parishioners are active in passing on their faith and the teachings of Christ, and especially that their own lives are a witness and example for unbelievers and lapsed Christians, for those who have found themselves far from their Church. Our Mission Days are an opportunity to spend ten days in prayerful expectation of Pentecost in the hope of being filled with the power from above, so that the Holy Spirit might descend anew and once again transfigures the faithful. In this we follow the example of the first disciples and Apostles who together with our Lord's Mother awaited in expectation, preparing for the coming of the Consoler. On the fiftieth day the love of God was poured out into their hearts in such a powerful manner (see Rom 5:5) that with great joy they were able to depart for their mission and share their experience with all.

Thus they began proclaiming the Good News of God's great mercy, that the Father loves all beyond expectation, and through the sacrifice of His Son has granted forgiveness of sins to all, that the Consoler-Advocate endows all humankind with the possibility of living in a new way, as son and daughters of God, and defends them before God in the face of the devil's accusations. This is what happens with every human heart, which has truly believed in our Lord and is open to the action of the Holy Spirit in their personal lives.

How to conduct Mission Days?

Mission Days are designed to gather together the parish faithful for a brief common prayer service in their church (or in their homes) over a ten day period of expectation, as if on a pilgrimage of growth in the fruits of our faith. The format for daily reading and reflection is found in the *Mission Days Guidebook*

(Word of God, Reflection, Witness-Quote for the Day, Meaning, Prayer, Missionary Task), which can be used either in the morning after Divine Liturgy, or at any other time, as a pastor may see fit. Most importantly, as priests we must make preparations to conduct Mission Days in prayer, and leave the rest in God's hands, for the results are up to Him. Our task is to sow.

On the basis of our experience over the past two years, many priests prayerfully read the *Guidebook* material after morning Divine Liturgy, having delivered a short homily during the Liturgy itself. Other priests follow the practice of prayerful reflection on Missions Days in the evenings, immediately after a Moleben (eg. for May devotions), and preach either after the Gospel or after the service. Also, some priests announce that throughout Mission Days they will be serving Divine Liturgies for special intentions (eg. for the conversion of family members, for the healing of addictions, for a particular pastoral need in the parish) and invite parishioners to offer their personal prayer intentions, having prepared special cards for this purpose. Such special prayers can also be offered in the litany during evening Moleben.

If parishioners are unable to participate in daily services in their church, as pastor, you should explain to your faithful, that they can gather at home with their family and friends to pray together, following the *Mission Days Guidebook*. Thus, a greater number of faithful can be united in prayer with our entire Church, imploring our Lord to revive the gift of a missionary spirit among the faithful of our Church, and asking the Holy Spirit to guide those, who already work in missions: the clergy, religious and laity.

The order of readings from the *Mission Days Guidebook*:

1. **Word of God.** As in the beginning was the Word and through it all came to being, and the Word of God is capable of cutting through to a human heart like a two-edged sword, we too begin with the Word of God, following the ten readings from the Acts of the Apostles according to the liturgical practice of our Church.
2. **Reflection.** The proclaimed Word of God is followed by a brief reflection: to what is this word calling us, what is the Lord saying in our hearts, what is His call to action. And further: how does our heart respond to God's call.
3. **Quote of the Day – Witnessing.** Then we listen to the quote of some saint or famous spiritual leader, offered to the community of faithful for

further reflection. This quote should be considered throughout the day, and possibly even memorized.

4. **Meaning.** Each day is dedicated to remembering some important event in our Christian life (For example, on the first day we solemnly commemorate and celebrate the gift of our Baptism and adoption as children of God). Here we offer the faithful a series of rhetorical questions designed to invite them to reflect on the meaning of the event *for them personally*.
5. **Prayer.** Then a short prayer is offered, which is tied to and reminds us of the particular event in our life being commemorated.
6. **Missionary Task.** Finally, each parishioner returns home and into the world with a specific missionary task to be fulfilled. It can be quite beautiful, when members of even the smallest parish community accept these simple tasks and, for Christ's sake, with love, zeal and a sense of responsibility rush to serve and fulfill the saving task entrusted to them.

Instructions for the Clergy. Please find included a document with further instructions (unfortunately available only in Ukrainian), which describe in additional detail the Purpose, Focus, Methodological Foundations and provides some Practical Instructions; also included are Recommendations for Homilies (Thematic Points) for each day.

For us who have been called to ordained ministry, these Mission Days are an opportunity to renew our vocation commitment, and to seek new ways to invite the faithful laity to a broader participation in the apostolic mandate that our Lord gives to all the baptized. In closing, Reverend and Dear Fathers, I encourage you to fervently ask our Lord in prayer for a devoted and courageous pastor's heart, one that is ready to entrust the ninety-nine sheep to God in order to search for the one that is lost, so that it too can find salvation in Jesus Christ.

Devotedly and prayerfully Yours,

+Josaphat

Head of the Patriarchal Council for Evangelization