Today’s second reading offers what sounds like a final farewell from Paul to Timothy and the many Christians he welcomed to faith in Jesus. “I am already being poured out like a libation, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have competed well; I have finished the race; I have kept the faith. From now on the crown of righteousness awaits me, which the Lord, the just judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me, but to all who have longed for His appearance” (2 Timothy 4:6-8). The greatest missionary of the early Church is not boasting about his own accomplishments. Rather, Paul is reminding all those who follow Christ that we, like him, are expected to give all we have and are to the Son of God who redeemed us. Paul trusted that the many hardships he had endured would end in the eternal life that Jesus promised to him as well as to all who pursue His way of love and life. More than that, he reassures us that the gift and goal of heaven is available to each one of us.

After Jesus ascended to the Father, the Holy Spirit descended on the Apostles and they journeyed throughout the Mediterranean area and beyond. They and other disciples introduced the saving message of our Lord and proclaimed the sacrifice of His own life that He offered for our sake. Since then, every generation has produced men and women who give their lives in different ways in order to share the faith and to build up the Church.

During this Extraordinary Mission Month of October, we honor several who served God and His people in remarkable ways. St. Luke was one of the early missionaries and the author of a Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles. Martyred Sister Dorothy Stang, SNDdeN was a voice for the indigenous people of the Amazon and defender of the environment, all through fervent missionary witness of the Gospel. St. Thérèse of Lisieux, the Little Flower, never left her Carmelite convent in France, but her prayerful dedication to the work and welfare of priests and missionaries led to her being named a patroness of the missions. Now, each of us can joyfully and gratefully show our love for Christ by striving for sanctity ourselves and by encouraging others to lead lives of holiness.

For more about the Extraordinary Missionary Month and related resources, visit this website. For resources for the celebration of World Mission Sunday, visit this website.