

Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time C/2019

The readings of this Sunday talk about the mission of the Church. They show that God wants the salvation of the world and of mankind. They invite us to believe in God's mission of salvation for the world and to cooperate in his project.

The first reading recalls the prophecy of Isaiah over the consolation about to come for Israel. It announces the joy that everybody will feel over Jerusalem as God will visit the country and comfort his people. It equally announces the end of the mourning in Jerusalem and the blessings that God will bestow upon his people.

What is behind this text is the idea that God is the consolation of his people. There is also the idea that God is capable of covering his beloved ones with blessings beyond their merits. The last idea is related to the truth that where God brings his power, things change for the best.

This text allows us to understand the stakes of today's Gospel as Jesus sends his disciples into mission. First of all, the Gospel speaks of the appointment of seventy- two disciples that Jesus sent ahead of him in pairs to the places he intended to visit.

Then, it reports Jesus' words about the abundance of the harvest and the scarcity of laborers with the injunction that they pray the Father to send more laborers in his harvest.

The Gospel reports also Jesus' words of warning to the disciples and the restrictions given to them about material possessions. In the same line of thought, the Gospel reports Jesus' directives to them about what they have to do and not do in the mission.

In the end, the Gospel gives an account of their return by highlighting their joy over the success of their mission and Jesus' tempering of their excitement by reminding them of the reality of the suffering to come before the joy of heaven.

What do we learn from today's Gospel? Today I want to talk about the mission of the Church. From the outset, let me say that according to today's Gospel, the mission of the Church is to continue the work of Jesus Christ by proclaiming the Good News of salvation to all the people, by bringing them to believe in God and by helping them to live in a godly manner so that they come one day to their eternal salvation.

This vision of the mission is deduced from the fact that Jesus sent his disciples ahead of him in the towns and places he intended to go with a goal of preaching and announcing the Good News of the Kingdom he was already proclaiming.

First of all, Jesus sends on mission the seventy-two disciples and not only the twelve apostles. This is a very significant detail. It means that the mission of the Church is given to everybody and not only to the ordained ministers. Each one of us is a missionary in his own way. Each is called to proclaim Jesus Christ and to be his witness before the world.

Moreover, by sending the disciples in pairs, Jesus wants to draw our attention to the importance of the community. In other words, the mission is above all collective and not individual. Therefore, the Church is not a private business where anybody can do anything he wants because he is accountable to nobody but himself. If Jesus sends the disciples in pairs, it is also in order to remind us that we are mutually completing what

each other lacks. Therefore, we have to count on one another for the success of the mission. Whenever this reality is forgotten, it brings trouble and frustration in the life of the church.

In itself, the mission is not easy, but rather, difficult. It is difficult because the environment in which the disciple works is not always open to Jesus' teaching. Moreover, because the things of God do not attract people in the same way as the things of the world do. That is why Jesus talks about laboring among the wolves, the scarcity of the labors and recommends to pray to the Father to send many workers for his harvest.

This statement of Jesus about the scarcity of laborers is very important for the understanding of the mission today. In truth, it should temper our pessimism when dealing with the problem of the scarcity of religious vocations. In fact, if at the time of Jesus, things were already difficult, what can we say about our time? In other words, Jesus' injunction that we pray for vocations shows that the problem of shortage of vocations is older than we think, that even in his time things were not better than they are today.

But, it means also that we have to be optimistic about the future of the Church. I sincerely believe that if the church was a human business, it would have already died. But, because it is the work of God, it will survive even the worst of its crises.

Does this statement mean that because the Church is the work of God, then, the disciple should not care about what he does? No; that would be a misunderstanding of Jesus. In truth, the disciple has to work with zeal and give the best of himself to the duty given to him, but he must also show his detachment with regard to material possessions lest they become an obstacle in his duty. It is for that reason that Jesus speaks of not carrying money or sack or sandals.

In other words, the disciple should give priority to the mission out of love for Christ and not for personal gains. He has to be a witness of God's providence by relying on the hospitality of the members of the community, by living a very simple life.

Moreover, he must show discretion by being welcomed for the Good News without being ashamed of receiving some appreciation in turn. Finally, the disciple should not be the seeker of luxury. As Jesus says, he should not be moving from one house to another. Instead, he should be happy with what he gets in his ministry. After all, there is a compensation for the mission, not based on the success of his work, but on the fact that his name is written in heaven.

On this Sunday that Jesus reminds us of the importance of the mission, let us ask the Lord to bless those who have chosen to work for the glory of his kingdom. May he assist them in their effort to bring the Good News to the world! May God bless you all!

Isaiah 66: 10-14c; Galatians 6: 14-18; Luke 10: 1-12, 17-20



Homily Date: July 07, 2019
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Contact: www.mbala.org
Document Name: 20190707homily.pdf