

Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time C/2025

The readings of this Sunday talk about God's project of salvation and peace. The first reading approaches that project under the background of the return of the people of Israel from exile in Babylon. Upon their return, the people realized quickly that gaining freedom is one thing while succeeding with a bright future as a nation is another.

The difficulties met in rebuilding the country led many to disappointment and the questioning of their faith in God. To console them, God sent the prophet Isaiah to comfort them and reassure them of his support. He promised to make Jerusalem prosperous and bring joy to their afflicted hearts and weakened bodies.

If in the Old Testament that project was guaranteed by God's fidelity to his people, in the New Testament it was achieved through the death and the resurrection of Jesus. That is why for Saint Paul the cross of our Lord plays a big role. It is an instrument with which God has established peace with the world through the blood of his Son. It is far better than the circumcision through which the Jews claimed their belonging to the holy people of God. The cross is a motive of pride and the prize of our salvation.

God's project of salvation and peace is the purpose of the mission our Lord gives to his disciples in today's Gospel. Unlike in some episodes where the mission is given to the twelve apostles, in today's Gospel, it is given to the seventy-two disciples.

The number seventy-two is representative of all the nations existing in the world, as stated in Genesis 10. The mission is given to the whole Church and to all the believers. It is not a privileged of few, but rather a task reserved to all the disciples, each according to his vocation. Therefore, the Gospel is given to all the peoples and nations of the earth. To them belongs the mission of spreading the good news all over the world.

To be successful, the mission has to satisfy some demands. The first requirement is prayer. Our Lord formulates this demand when he says: "Ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest." To ask the Father is to pray to him, to open our heart and mind to God so that our action may start with him, be guided by him, and find its end in him. Without being rooted in prayer, we run the risk of failing in our mission. Prayer is important because the mission in itself is difficult; it has to be fulfilled in a world totally hostile to our Lord's teaching.

That is why our Lord says, "I am sending you like lambs among wolves". Prayer is important because it is a recognition that the mission does not belong to us. It draws God's blessing on what we do for the glory of his name and the salvation of our fellows. We are only the instruments God uses to reach out to others and not the owners of the mission. We need the master of the vineyard to strengthen us and assist us for the success of the mission.

Given the abundance of the harvest and the few workers, it is our duty to continually ask the master in a sustaining prayer to send laborers in his field. This statement should temper our pessimism when dealing with the problem of the scarcity of religious vocations. That the injunction of praying for vocations comes from our Lord is sign 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. It means also that we have to be optimistic about the future of the Church. 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.

The mission requires too detachment from material things and reliance on God's providence to provide for the needs of the missionary. Any form of greed and pursuit of personal gains is prejudicial to the mission. That is why our Lord enjoins the disciples not to let themselves be distracted by possessions or human securities. The priority should be given only to the mission out of love of Christ and not for personal favors.

The mission requires equally an evident discretion, which can be exercised in being welcomed for the good news without being ashamed of receiving a show of appreciation in turn. However, the disciple should not be the seeker after luxury.

For that reason, our Lord says, the disciple should not be moving from one house to another. Instead, he should be happy with what he got in his ministry. After all, there is a compensation for the mission, not based on the success of the worker, but on the fact that his name is written in the book of life.

Finally, the mission is collegial, that is, it should be fulfilled in group as a team or a community. That is the main reason why our Lord sent the disciples two by two. What it means is that the church is not a private business. The Gospel should not be left to the individual imagination. It is the work of the community of the believers, that is, the Church.

Whoever speaks in the name of Christ should be in communion with his brothers and sisters. If our Lord sends the disciples two by two, it means also that they are complementary; they have to count on one another for the success of the mission. Whenever this reality is forgotten, it brings trouble in the life of the church. May God bless the apostolate of each one of us and everything we do as a community for the glory of his name and the salvation of our brothers and sisters! Amen.

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



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