

GOSPEL

LUKE 10:1-12, 17-20

The Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them out ahead of him, in pairs, to all the towns and places he himself was to visit.

He said to them, 'The harvest is rich but the labourers are few, so ask the Lord of the harvest to send labourers to his harvest. Start off now, but remember, I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. Carry no purse, no haversack, no sandals. Salute no one on the road. Whatever house you go into, let your first words be, "Peace to this house!" And if a man of peace lives there, your peace will go and rest on him; if not, it will come back to you. Stay in the same house, taking what food and drink they have to offer, for the labourer deserves his wages; do not move from house to house.

Whenever you go into a town where they make you welcome, eat what is set before you. Cure those in it who are sick, and say, "The kingdom of God is very near to you." But whenever you enter a town and they do not make you welcome, go out into its streets and say, "We wipe off the very dust of your town that clings to our feet, and leave it with you. Yet be sure of this: the kingdom of God is very near." I tell you, on that day it will not go as hard with Sodom as with that town.'

The seventy-two came back rejoicing. 'Lord,' they said, 'even the devils submit to us when we use your name.' He said to them, 'I watched Satan fall like lightning from heaven.

Yes, I have given you power to tread underfoot serpents and scorpions and the whole strength of the enemy; nothing shall ever hurt you. Yet do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you; rejoice rather that your names are written in heaven.'

The Gospel of the Lord.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. In their mission and work the disciples are asked to unburden themselves from all unnecessary baggage, keeping simple focus on proclaiming the Kingdom and healing. What might we need to 'let go of' in order to move closer to Jesus and his mission for our lives?
2. The Seventy-Two came back rejoicing it seems in what 'they did'. Jesus however reminds them that their focus ought to be on what God is doing in and through them. How do you respond to the blessings and power which God has worked through you and your actions?

A REFLECTION BY POPE FRANCIS

Today's Gospel passage, taken from the tenth Chapter of the Gospel of Luke, makes us consider how necessary it is to invoke God, "the Lord of harvest to send out laborers". The "laborers" whom Jesus speaks of are the missionaries of the Kingdom of God, whom he himself calls and sends on "ahead of him, two by two, into every town and place where he himself was about to come". Their task is to proclaim a message of salvation addressed to everyone.

Missionaries always proclaim a message of salvation to everyone; not only those missionaries who go afar, but we too, [are] Christian missionaries who express a good word of salvation.

This is the gift that Jesus gives us with the Holy Spirit. This message is to say: "The kingdom of God has come near to you", because God has "come near" to us through Jesus; God became one of us; in Jesus, God reigns in our midst, his merciful love overcomes sin and human misery.

This is the Good News that the "laborers" must bring to everyone: a message of hope and comfort, of peace and charity. When Jesus sends the disciples ahead of him into the villages, he tells them: "first, say 'Peace be to this house!'; heal the sick in it". All of this signifies that the Kingdom of God is built day by day and already offers on this earth its fruits of

conversion, of purification, of love and of comfort among men. It is a beautiful thing! Building day by day this Kingdom of God that is to be made. Do not destroy, build!

With what spirit must disciples of Jesus carry out this mission? First of all they must be aware of the difficult and sometimes hostile reality that awaits them. Jesus minces no words about this! Jesus says: "I send you out as lambs in the midst of wolves". This is very clear.

Hostility is always at the beginning of persecutions of Christians; because Jesus knows that the mission is blocked by the work of evil. For this reason, the labourer of the Gospel will strive to be free from every kind of human conditioning, carrying neither purse nor bag nor sandals, as Jesus counselled, so as to place reliance solely in the power of the Cross of Jesus Christ.

This means abandoning every motive of personal advantage, careerism or hunger for power, and humbly making ourselves instruments of the salvation carried out by Jesus' sacrifice.

A Christian's mission in the world is splendid, it is a mission intended for everyone, it is a mission of service, excluding no one; it requires a great deal of generosity and above all setting one's gaze and heart facing on High, to invoke the Lord's help.

There is a great need for Christians who joyfully witness to the Gospel in everyday life. The disciples, sent out by Jesus, "returned with joy". When we do this, our heart fills with joy. This expression makes me think of how much the Church rejoices, she revels when her children receive the Good News thanks to the dedication of so many men and women who daily proclaim the Gospel: priests — those brave parish priests whom we all know —, nuns, consecrated women, missionary men and women.... I ask myself — listen to the question —: how many of you young people who are now present today in the Square, hear the Lord's call to follow him? Fear not!

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Be courageous and bring to others this guiding light of apostolic zeal that these exemplary disciples have given to us.

Let us pray to the Lord, through the intercession of the Virgin Mary, that the Church may never lack generous hearts that work to bring everyone the love and kindness of our heavenly Father.

REFLECTION QUESTION

- What has struck you from this reflection by the Holy Father?

PRAYER

*Spend some time in prayer
with one another*

1. Conscious of what has just been shared, members briefly name/ describe their prayer needs.
2. Intentionally call on the Holy Spirit to be present (e.g. "Come Holy Spirit, please be present as we pray")
3. Move to prayers of thanks and praise to God
4. Pray for each others' prayer needs. Where appropriate, you may like to encourage the group to place a hand on the shoulder of the individual that you are currently praying for.
5. Conclude your prayer time with another prayer of praise, perhaps reciting the 'Glory Be' or similar prayer.