

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.

A REFLECTION BY POPE FRANCIS

Today’s Gospel passage presents Jesus who sends 72 disciples on mission, in addition to the 12 Apostles. The number 72 likely refers to all the nations. Indeed, in the Book of Genesis 72 different nations are mentioned. Thus, this conveyance prefigures the Church’s mission to proclaim the Gospel to all peoples. Jesus says to those disciples: “The harvest is

plentiful, but the labourers are few; pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest!”.

This request by Jesus is always valid. We must always pray to the “Lord of the harvest”, namely, God the Father, that he send labourers into his field which is the world. And each of us must do so with an open heart, with a missionary attitude; our prayer must not be limited only to our needs, to our necessities: a prayer is truly Christian if it also has a universal dimension.

In sending out the 72 disciples, Jesus gives them precise instructions which express the characteristics of the mission. The first, as we have already seen, is: pray; the second: go; and then: carry no purse, no bag...; say, ‘Peace be to this house’ ... remain in the same house... do not go from house to house... heal the sick in it and say to them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you’”. And if they do not receive you, go out into the streets and take your leave. These imperatives show that the mission is based on prayer; that it is itinerant: it is not idle; it is itinerant; that it requires separation and poverty; that it brings peace and healing, signs of the closeness of the Kingdom of God; that it is not proselytism but proclamation and witness; and that it also requires frankness and the evangelical freedom to leave while highlighting the responsibility of having rejected the message of salvation, but without condemnation and cursing.

If lived in these terms, the mission of the Church will be characterized by joy. And how does this passage end? The 72 “returned with joy”. It is not an ephemeral joy, which flows from the success of the mission; on the contrary, it is a joy rooted in the promise that — as Jesus says: “your names are written in heaven”. With this expression he means inner joy, and the indestructible joy that is born out of the awareness of being called by God to follow his Son. That is, the joy of being his disciples. Today, for example, each of us, here in the Square, can think of the name we received on the day of Baptism: that name is “written in heaven”, in the heart of God the Father. And it is the joy of his gift that makes a missionary

of every disciple, those who walk in the company of the Lord Jesus, who learn from him to unsparingly expend themselves for others, free of oneself and of one’s possessions.

Together let us invoke the maternal protection of Mary Most Holy, that she support the mission of Christ’s disciples in every place; the mission to proclaim to all that God loves us, wants to save us, and calls us to join his Kingdom.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- 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?
- 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?

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.