Thursday of the Fourth Week in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (*Mk* 6:7-13): Jesus summoned the Twelve and began to send them out two by two and gave them authority over unclean spirits. He instructed them to take nothing for the journey but a walking stick –no food, no sack, no money in their belts. They were, however, to wear sandals but not a second tunic. He said to them, "Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave from there. Whatever place does not welcome you or listen to you, leave there and shake the dust off your feet in testimony against them." So they went off and preached repentance. The Twelve drove out many demons, and they anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them.

"Jesus summoned the Twelve and began to send them out two by two... So they went off and preached repentance"

Fr. Josep VALL i Mundó
(Barcelona, Spain)

Today the Gospel recounts the first of the apostolic missions. Christ sends the Twelve to preach, to heal all kinds of sick people and to prepare the ways of definitive salvation. This is the mission of the Church, and also that of every Christian. The Second Vatican Council affirmed that "For the Christian vocation by its very nature is also a vocation to the apostolate. No part of the structure of a living body is merely passive. The member who fails to make his proper contribution to the development of the Church must be said to be useful neither to the Church nor to himself."

The present world needs —as Gustave Thibon said— a "soul supplement" to be able to regenerate it. Only Christ with his doctrine is the medicine for the illnesses of the whole world. The world has its crises. It is not only a partial moral crisis, or of human values: it is a crisis of the whole. And the most precise term to define it is that of a "crisis of the soul."

Christians, with the grace and doctrine of Jesus, find themselves in the midst of temporal structures to give them life and order them towards the Creator: "so that by hearing the message of salvation the whole world may believe, by believing it may hope, and by hoping it may love" (Saint Augustine). Christians cannot escape from this world. As Bernanos wrote: "You have thrown us into the midst of the dough, into the midst of the multitude like yeast; we will conquer, inch by inch, the universe that sin has snatched from us; Lord, we will give it back to you just as we received it on that first morning of days, in all its order and in all its holiness."

One of the secrets is to love the world with all our soul and to live with love the mission entrusted by Christ to the Apostles and to all of us. In the words of Saint Josemaría, “Apostolate is love for God thatoverflows and communicates itself to others... And apostolate is the precise and necessary outward manifestation of interior life.” This must be our daily witness among men and throughout all ages.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “That by hearing the message of salvation the whole world may believe, by believing it may hope, and by hoping it may love.” (Saint Augustine)

- We must revive in ourselves the burning conviction of Paul, who cried out: ‘Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel’ (1 Cor 9:16). This passion will not fail to stir in the Church a new sense of mission, which cannot be left to a group of ‘specialists’ but must involve the responsibility of all the members of the People of God.” (Saint John Paul II)

- “The duty of Christians to take part in the life of the Church impels them to act as witnesses of the Gospel and of the obligations that flow from it. This witness is a transmission of the faith in words and deeds.” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, Nº 2472)