

Sunday 11th (A) in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (Mt 9,36—10,8): When Jesus saw the crowds, He was moved with pity, for they were harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd. Then He said to his disciples, «The harvest is abundant but the workers are only few. Ask the master of the harvest to send workers to gather his harvest».

Then he called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority over the unclean spirits to drive them out and to heal every disease and sickness. These are the names of the twelve apostles: first Simon, called Peter, and his brother Andrew; James, the son of Zebedee, and his brother John; Philip and Bartholomew, Thomas and Matthew, the tax collector; James, the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Simon, the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, the man who would betray him.

Jesus sent these twelve on mission with the instruction: «Do not visit pagan territory and do not enter a Samaritan town. Go instead to the lost sheep of the people of Israel. Go and proclaim this message: ‘The kingdom of heaven is near’. Heal the sick, bring the dead back to life, cleanse the lepers, and drive out demons. You received this as a gift, so give it as a gift».

«When Jesus saw the crowds, He was moved with pity, for they were harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd»

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Today, the Gospel tells us that the Lord was moved with pity —when he saw the crowd— for they were harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd (cf. Mt 9:36). The people of Israel knew very well, better than we —urbanites— do, what a shepherd was, and the hustle and bustle sheep could create when lost and without their shepherd.

Should Jesus come today, I think He would repeat the same words: that there are a lot of disoriented and confused persons, trying to find meaning in their lives. —O Lord, how can we overcome this big problem? Well, Jesus requests prayer, so He chooses twelve Apostles and sends them over to proclaim His message, the Kingdom of God.

He chose twelve apostles! He sent them to proclaim the Kingdom of Heaven. He sent these twelve men to announce: «‘The kingdom of Heaven is near’. Heal the sick, bring the dead back to life, cleanse the lepers, and drive out demons. You received this as a gift, so give it as a gift» (Mt 10:7-8). What the Apostles did and what we have to do is to worship the person of Jesus Christ and divulge his message of peace and love, and do it as a gift.

All of us are called: the successors of the Apostles —the Bishops and other pastors—, but also, along with them, the rest of the flock. We all have the same mission in this world: to heal the sores and diseases of mankind, and guide it in its quest. Not only the bishops and the priests, but also the lay people: for instance, with their families —in its dual character of home and school of faith; at the university and schools; with the communication Media; in the public health systems... and every Christian at his/her working and social environment.

Let us hear St. Francis de Sales, who writes: «At the creation God commanded the plants to bear fruit each according to its kind and now likewise commands Christians, the living branches of the vine, to bear fruit by practicing devotion according to their state in life».