Saturday of the First Week of Advent

Gospel text (*Mt* 9:35—10:1.6-8): Jesus went around to all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and curing every disease and illness. At the sight of the crowds, his heart was moved with pity for them because they were troubled and abandoned, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few; so ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest.”

Then he summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits to drive them out and to cure every disease and every illness “Go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. As you go, make this proclamation: ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, drive out demons. Without cost you have received; without cost you are to give.”

“Ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest.”

Fr. Xavier PAGÉS i Castañer
(Barcelona, Spain)

Today, having already completed a week of our journey in preparation for Christmas, we have seen that one of the virtues we must cultivate during Advent is hope. But not a passive hope, like someone waiting for a train to come, but an active hope, which moves us to prepare ourselves, doing everything necessary so that Jesus may be born again in our hearts.

But we must try not to be content with only what we hope for, but—above all—to go and discover what God expects of us. Like the twelve apostles, we too are called to follow his ways. May we hear today the voice of the Lord who, through the prophet Isaiah, tells us: “This is the way; walk in it” (Isaiah 30:21, from today’s first reading). As each of us follows His way, God expects all of us to proclaim with our lives that “The kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 10:7).

Today's Gospel tells us how, faced with that multitude of people, Jesus had compassion on them and said, “The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few; so ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest” (Mt 9:37-38). He has chosen to place his trust in us and wants us to respond to our calling

to become apostles in our world, in all its diversity. The mission for which God the Father sent his Son into the world requires us to be his successors. In our day, we also find a disoriented and hopeless multitude, thirsting for the Good News of Salvation that Christ brought us, of which we are the messengers. It is a mission entrusted to everyone. Aware of our weaknesses and handicaps, let us rely on constant prayer and be happy to become collaborators in the plan of redemption that Christ has revealed to us.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “The harvest is great but the laborers are few. This cannot be said without a heavy heart, for although there are many to hear the good news there are only a few to preach it. Pray for us so that our tongue may not grow weary of exhortation.” (Saint Gregory the Great)

- “The world is not a futile confusion of drudgery and pain, for all the distress the world contains is supported in the arms of merciful love. The person who celebrates Advent in this spirit will legitimately be able to speak of the joyous, blessed and grace-filled season of Christmas.” (Benedict XVI)

- “With the Nicene Creed, we answer by confessing: ‘For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven; by the power of the Holy Spirit, he became incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and was made man’.” (Catechism Of The Catholic Church № 456)