

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, a week into our preparation for the celebration of Christmas, we see that one of the virtues, which we have to work on during Advent, is hope. Not in a passive way, like that of someone waiting for a train, but active hope, hope which gets us ready to give all that is needed for Jesus to be born again in our hearts.

We can't be happy just thinking about what it is we are hoping for, we have to think about what it is that God hopes of us. He wants us to follow him, just like he did the apostles. He tells us through Isaiah: “This is the way, walk in it” (Is 30:21,

today's first reading). God hopes of us that we will give witness, each one in his own particular situation and circumstances that “the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Mt 10:7).

Today's Gospel tells of how Jesus, in front of that huge crowd, felt compassion 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 always wanted to be able to count on us, he wants us, in all our diverse circumstances to become real apostles of the world in which we move and live. The mission for which God sent his son to the world depends on us for its continuation. We find in our present day a mass of desperate and disorientated souls, thirsting for the Good News of Salvation that Christ has brought us, and of which we are the messengers. It is a mission, which has been entrusted to every one of us. Conscious of our weaknesses and our failings, we get the support we need from constant prayer and are happy that this way we can collaborate with the plan for redemption that Christ has revealed.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

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“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)

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“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)

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“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 N° 456)