February 3rd: Memorial of Saint Ansgar (Oscar), bishop and missionary

Gospel text (*Mk* 16:15-20): Jesus appeared to the Eleven and said to them: "Go into the whole world and proclaim the Gospel to every creature. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved; whoever does not believe will be condemned. These signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will drive out demons, they will speak new languages. They will pick up serpents with their hands, and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not harm them. They will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover."

Then the Lord Jesus, after he spoke to them, was taken up into heaven and took his seat at the right hand of God. But they went forth and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the word through accompanying signs.

"They went forth and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them"

Fr. Antoni CAROL i Hostench
(Sant Cugat del Vallès, Barcelona, Spain)

Today we celebrate Saint Ansgar (Oscar) (c. 801, Gaul – 865, Saxony), known as the "Apostle of Scandinavia." In his life he embodied the Lord's missionary mandate: "Go into the whole world and proclaim the Gospel to every creature" (Mk 16:15). In the year 814 he took the habit of Saint Benedict. From a young age, Ansgar felt deep within himself Christ's call to go beyond the limits of what was known, to bring the Gospel not only to those who spoke his own language, but also to the peoples of the distant lands of northern Europe.

As a missionary and later Bishop of Hamburg-Bremen (832), his life was a constant pilgrimage among peoples of different traditions, often pagan, where faith was fragile and spiritual darkness profound. He put the Gospel mandate into practice with courage and humility, preaching more by example than by words, and living the demands of discipleship: fasting, prayer, poverty, and charity toward the poor he encountered along the way.

The life of Ansgar reminds us that proclaiming the Gospel is not a merely intellectual task, but one that calls for the total gift of oneself. Mark's text presents Jesus sending his disciples with the certainty that He himself accompanies the mission: "The Lord worked with them and confirmed the word through accompanying signs" (Mk 16:20). In Ansgar this missionary dynamism becomes tangible: he did not walk alone, but was driven by the power of the Spirit, facing cold, misunderstandings, and dangers, never

losing confidence in the Lord’s promise.

Today, the Church continues to live this universal mission. In the words of Pope Leo XIV, “the key to all evangelization is bearing witness to a personal encounter with Christ, passing on what we have contemplated and lived so that others too may come to know the Lord.” Saint Ansgar invites us to renew our daily commitment to the Gospel, not to fear stepping outside ourselves, and to trust that Jesus Christ continues to confirm his word in the history of every believer.