August 4th: Memorial of Saint John Vianney, Priest

Gospel text (*Mt* 9:35—10:1): Jesus went around all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news of the Kingdom, and he cured every sickness and disease. When he 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.

«Jesus went around all the towns (…) proclaiming the good news of the Kingdom, and he cured every sickness»

Fr. Josep Mª CAMPRUBÍ i Rovira
(Barcelona, Spain)

Today is the feast of Saint John Vianney, a pastor in accordance with the heart of God, who gave his life in humble and unselfish ministerial service for the salvation of his sheep. By following Jesus' footsteps, the saint "Curé d'Ars" visualized his priestly task after what today's Gospel so well explains: he had compassion of the harassed and helpless (cf. Mt 9:36), by offering them a friendly hand that would allow them to be redeemed. His healing action was mostly spread on the spirit ailments and diseases. From the humble place entrusted to his diligent pastoral care, his fame - as in the case of Jesus – expanded throughout towns and cities, and people hungry for peace travelled from everywhere to meet him.

The task of any good apostle, in line with the example set out by the master, is defined by a few key moments: to announce the Good News of the Kingdom; to shout from the rooftops that God is Love and that, therefore, He loves you and always will. Believe it!

And then the second part will be a reality: «he gave them authority to drive out impure spirits and to heal every disease and sickness» (Mt. 10:1). The disciple's forcefully proclaimed word accepted by the believing listener drives away those enemy spirits that threaten our peace, and cure the cruelest ailment that tortures us: the lack of love

"Our heart is small but prayer exalts it and makes it able to love God. Prayer is a taste of heaven' (St. John Vianney). With a deep knowledge of man's intimate feelings, the saint "Curé d'Ars" carried a multitude of people in his prayer and led them to experience the tenderness of the Good Shepherd. We need to hold Christ's hand which is offered to us under the figure of a shepherd or of a person sensitive to our pain.