

Meditations: Thursday of the Fourth Week of Ordinary Time

Some reflections that can enrich our prayer during the 4th Week in Ordinary Time. The topics are: the universal call to apostolate; we are never alone in our mission; the style of evangelization is simple.

- The universal call to apostolate
- We are never alone in our mission
- The style of evangelization is simple

JESUS WANTED the twelve apostles to embark on a first-hand experience of the mission after a few months with Him. *He began to send them out two by two (Mk 6:7)* to bring his message of salvation to neighboring villages. The term “apostle” means “sent.” During those days, the Twelve were witnesses to God’s power and the effectiveness of his words and deeds. They were amazed by the miracles they were able to perform in the Lord’s name.

The mission of the entire Church – which is thus our mission – is prefigured in this initial *sending out*. To bring about the Kingdom of God, Jesus Christ establishes a new universal people, the Church. And for this purpose, He chooses the twelve apostles, who succeed and replace the patriarchs of the twelve tribes of Israel; they are the seed of

his Church. In the name of Jesus, *they cast out many demons and anointed with oil many who were sick and healed them* (Mk 6:13). This mission will eventually take them to all corners of the earth: *Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation* (Mk 16:15).

“The whole Church is apostolic [...] in that she is ‘sent out’ into the whole world. All members of the Church share in this mission, though in various ways.”^[1] Therefore, as the Second Vatican Council emphasized, “the Christian vocation by its very nature is also a vocation to the apostolate.”^[2] We were present in that *sending out* of Christ: it is an essential part of our calling. Christians are personally sent as witnesses of a message received, of an encounter experienced. Disciples, therefore, “must speak in Jesus’ name and preach the Kingdom of

God without being worried about whether or not they will succeed.”^[3]

THE TWELVE went out, at Jesus' request, *two by two*. This instruction reveals to us that the apostles did not go alone; they helped and supported one another. The mission is not an individual task. On the contrary, it is carried out in the Church and is part of it. In the apostolic mission, which concerns everyone, all Christians are aware that they are not doing something personal. “When Christians understand and implement the catholicity of the Church, when they realise how urgent it is to announce the good news of salvation to everyone, they find that they have to become *all things to all people, that by all means I might save some* (1 Cor 9:22).”^[4]

When the founder of Opus Dei was canonized, St. John Paul II affirmed: “St. Josemaría was profoundly convinced that the Christian life entails a mission and an apostolate: we are in the world to save it with Christ. He loved the world passionately, with a “redemptive love” (cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 604). Precisely for this reason his teachings have helped so many ordinary members of the faithful to discover the redemptive power of faith, its capacity to transform the earth.”^[5] And in that mission, even if we may find ourselves physically alone at times, in reality, we are accompanied by all the Christians from heaven and earth, especially those who share a specific vocation like ours.

It is important to note that, in the description of the mission of the twelve, the person of Jesus Himself is at the center of everything: He calls,

He sends, He confers his power, and He specifies how the disciples should act. Moreover, He is the message; his very person is the Good News. The Gospel is not a set of moral rules, a way of life, or a series of articles to believe. Christians are people who follow Jesus, in whom we are all gathered from before the creation of the world until the end of time.

“JESUS CHRIST is the beginning and the end, the Alpha and the Omega; he is the king of the new world [...]. He is the light and the truth; indeed, he is *the way, the truth and the life* (Jn 14:6). He is the bread and the spring of living water to satisfy our hunger and our thirst. He is our shepherd, our guide, our model, our comfort, our brother. [...] Jesus Christ is our constant preaching.”^[6] —

Before embarking on the mission, Jesus gives the disciples some very concrete instructions: *Take nothing for your journey—no staff, no bag, no bread, no money in your belts. Wear sandals but not an extra tunic* (Mk 6:8-9). He does not offer a long list of things to consider; He focuses on what is essential. The style of evangelizing recommended by Jesus is one of simplicity and poverty. They are to walk without too many accessories, with only the essentials, without placing their security in anything other than Christ's command. By rejecting the superfluous, what is likely incidental, the disciple walks more easily at the pace set by the Lord. The bread that sustains us is the certainty of fulfilling a divine mission. Anything not in some way in the service of that mission takes a back seat.

This way of relating to material things is an essential part of the

Christian message. “Discipleship, then, is not an easy journey on a level road. It can include moments of hardship [...]. The Cross, sign of love and of total self-giving, is therefore the emblem of the disciple called to be configured to the glorious Christ.”^[7] When the cloud of confusion lifts, we can imitate the first disciples who, after being sent, “still had doubts: they did not know what to do, and they gathered around Mary, Queen of Apostles, so as to become zealous proclaimers of the Truth which will save the world.”^[8]

^[1] *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 863.

^[2] Second Vatican Council, *Apostolicam actuositatem*, no. 2.

[3] Pope Benedict XVI, Homily, 15-VII-2012.

[4] St. Josemaría, *Collected Letters*, Letter 4, no. 15.

[5] St. John Paul II, Audience, 7-X-2002.

[6] Pope Paul VI, Homily, 29-XI-1970.

[7] St. John Paul II, Catechesis, 6-IX-2000.

[8] St. Josemaría, *Furrow*, no. 232.

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