

Commentary on the Gospel: "The harvest is rich"

Gospel for the Eleventh Sunday of Ordinary Time (Cycle A) and commentary.

Gospel (*Mt 9:36 - 10:8*)

When Jesus saw the crowds he felt sorry for them because they were harassed and dejected, like sheep without a shepherd.

Then he said to his disciples, 'The harvest is rich but the labourers are few, so ask the Lord of the harvest to send labourers to his harvest'. He summoned his twelve disciples, and

gave them authority over unclean spirits with power to cast them out and to cure all kinds of diseases and sickness.

These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon who is called Peter, and his brother Andrew; James the son of Zebedee, and his brother John; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas, and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, the one who was to betray him.

These twelve Jesus sent out, instructing them as follows: "Do not turn your steps to pagan territory, and do not enter any Samaritan town; go rather to the lost sheep of the House of Israel. And as you go, proclaim that the kingdom of heaven is close at hand. Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out

devils. You received without charge, give without charge."

Commentary

Today's Gospel begins by showing us Jesus' compassion. He sees these men, wants what is best for them, and, perceiving their aimlessness, decides to give them the greatest thing He has: God Himself. His compassion moves him to act for the good of the people before Him.

Jesus takes the initiative to choose apostles who will bring God to the whole world; He asks his followers to pray that God will send labourers to his harvest. Jesus makes it clear that He is the main actor in our salvation, not us, and supernatural means, not human strategies, are the way to bring faith to people's hearts. We don't start by organizing apostolic

activities, speaking, writing, or travelling: we start with prayer. As St. Josemaria wrote, "First, prayer; then, atonement; in the third place, very much 'in the third place', action."^[1] Apostolate is only efficacious when it is grounded in prayer and loving union with God.

Who are the labourers needed for the harvest? All Christians: lay people, priests, religious... God has called all of us to bring the good news of salvation to the world.

Jesus shares his mission with the Twelve. He calls them "apostles," which means "sent," when He chooses them because He sends them to do the same work He does: healing the sick, raising the dead, curing lepers, and casting out demons. Those tasks went far beyond the apostles' human capacity. Most of them were fishermen with no special training.

The message Jesus gives the disciples to share is all about the Kingdom of God. God believes so firmly in the establishment of the Kingdom and the redemption of human hearts that He "dares" (so to speak) to rely on the apostles to bring it about. And we too are called to this mission. God waits for our free response and cooperation to make the Kingdom a reality.

He relies on us today too: He isn't waiting for a more propitious moment or for us to feel ready. We will never be ready, because we will never be worthy ambassadors of the saving message. We need to say yes now because Jesus is near us and waiting for our response. God knows how to form effective and faithful apostles on the foundation of our generosity.

[1] St. Josemaria, *The Way*, no. 82

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