

The Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

In today's Gospel Jesus picks seventy-two disciples, gives them instructions, sends them out and then hears their report back of what they did. At first glance that does not seem an important mission. Jesus will soon be passing through several towns and villages, so he sends advance scouts to these places that "he intended to visit." He wants to inform the citizens of those towns of his forthcoming visit.

But if we look more closely at this text, we discover what sort of behavior Jesus expects from those who are entrusted with the task of making his approach known to people.

In the first place Jesus himself chooses the seventy-two and sends them out. And since he feels that there are too few laborers in the vineyard, he urges his disciples to pray that the Father will send out still more. It almost seems a contradiction that only those he chooses are sent out and yet they are not enough.

The Gospel does not give reasons for this attitude on the part of the Lord. What is certain is that Jesus does not ask for volunteers. He does not send out an appeal to disciples to dedicate themselves in this way. He himself designates those who are to be sent. And since he perceives that there is a need for many, he asks the disciples to pray to the Father so that others will be designated. So here the ones proclaiming to kingdom do so out of obedience to God's call, not on their own personal initiative.

In the Old Testament it seems the Lord has always acted thus. This is a constant feature in the vocation of the prophets. God comes to seek them out and it usually turns out that they are quite reluctant. But the Lord sends them out in any case. This process is nicely expressed in Jeremiah's account of his vocation. "The word of the Lord came to me thus: Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I dedicated you, a prophet to the nations I appointed you. 'Ah, Lord God!' I said, 'I know not how to speak; I am too young.' but the Lord answered me: Say not, 'I am too young.' To whomsoever I send you, you shall go; whatever I command you, you shall speak" (Jer 1:4-7).

These words of Jeremiah are almost a commentary on Jesus' actions in the Gospel. The Lord commissions those he sends to speak of God's plan. They do not speak their own message but the message God gives them.

Not only does the Lord choose and send out his disciples. He also tells them how they are to go about it. Jesus' instructions are quite explicit. He sends them out "as lambs in the midst of wolves." a lamb lives in a flock and is dependent on its shepherd. Since it is dependent on its shepherd, the lamb does not look to outside resources or outside means of security. That is

why Jesus' first instruction is that his disciples strip down: no walking staff or travelling bag or sandals. Then too a lamb is a gentle, ingenuous animal who does not impose his will on others and force them to submit to him.

The gentleness and ingenuousness of the lamb rules out an authoritarian attitude whereby he would tend to impose his personal ideas on others. The fact is that he will not be heeded by the wolves. He will only be understood by those who like himself, want to become lambs. He will not move from house to house, seeking his own satisfaction. He is free of rancor and unconcerned about the possible results of his efforts. A gentle stubbornness will lead him to keep repeating what he is commissioned to say even though people do not want to hear him or what he has to say. He would prefer to do that than to react violently against his rejection by those who oppose him. Finally, his main concern will be to speak the truth rather than to see others agreeing with him.

And yet we must remember Jesus' disciples themselves were chosen from among men. Thus the lambs that the Lord sends are ex-wolves themselves. There may even be some wolf left in some of the lambs. How much can be determined by seeing how faithful they are to the instructions given by Jesus to his advance men. To conform to the Lord's expectations one must be willing to switch from being a wolf to being a lamb. One outlook and way of acting must be replaced by another.

So Paul tells us in today's epistle, "all that matters is that one is anew". We cannot remain fixed in a particular state. We must be willing to go out of ourselves and to become something else. As Paul points out, we must crucify the world and be crucified to the world. He is saying that we must refuse to live in the world according to its logic. We must challenge the way other people understand and live out their lives.

And how do we do this? Paul says by bearing the marks of Jesus in our bodies. Of himself, he said: "I bear the brand marks of Jesus in my body." So the proclamation of the kingdom, as Jesus explains it to his envoys, is not a conviction that is to be impressed on others; it is the testimony of one's own life.

A person must believe in the kingdom strongly enough to conform his own life to it. Then one simple has to say: "The kingdom is at hand". The persuasive power of this message will not lie in intellectual arguments but in the harmony between these words and the life of the person who pronounces them.

Adopted from 'Sunday Examiner'

READINGS OF THE WEEK

Isaiah 66:10-14

Galatians 6:14-18

Luke 10:1-20

July 7, 2013

常 年 期 第 十 四 主 日

阿爾貝·范諾怡樞機主教

本主日聖道禮儀打開了傳教遠景。福音為我們敘述了耶穌派遣七十二門徒傳教的情節。第一篇讀經同我們講論了天主的愛，祂將祂的平安送到耶路撒冷。第二篇讀經也談了平安和憐憫。

福音的章節尤其關注到為普世傳教開啓的開端。事實上，「七十二」這個數目有象徵意義，意旨萬國萬民。創世紀書中提到七十二個不同民族。如此看來，對七十二個門徒的派遣預示了向萬國萬民傳教。其實，這時候實際的傳教活動尚未開始，因為在耶穌復活前，傳教活動只限於以色列，無論如何，現在卻已經指出了普世前景。這個前景在耶穌的話中也有所指出，祂說，莊稼多，因此需要許多工人。所以祂邀請他們求莊稼的主人，派遣工人來，收割祂的莊稼。

耶穌的這一請求永遠有效。教會該當常求莊稼的主人派遣工人來收割祂的莊稼。我們每個人該當以開放的心，以傳教的態度去求。我們的祈禱不該只限於我們的需求和我們的需要；只有普世幅度才稱得上是基督信仰的祈禱。在天主經中耶穌教我們祈求說：「願爾的國來臨」；是讓我們為普世傳教祈禱。耶穌派遣祂的門徒「猶如羔羊往狼群中。」宗徒們的使命同軍事使命，以人的途徑來取勝毫不相干。宗徒們不擁有所必備的人的途徑來做宣傳，來博得人的歡迎，他們所攜帶的是天主的許諾，好傳播和平。耶穌對門徒說：「不論進了哪一家，先說：願這一家平安！」征服者們為他們的事業啓程時，不攜帶這個和平信息。福音的信使們則帶去和平，因此他們沒有暴力工具。和平能滿足人最深切的渴望。復活後的耶穌向門徒們說的第一句話是：「願你們平安！」祂借著十字架使我們獲得修和、罪惡的赦免，因此同天主和好，獲得良心上的平安和人與人之間的平安。

耶穌這段話的幾個細節顯示出福音的信使們該當傳播和平，不懼任何阻礙，不受猶太人對遵守法律的限制。事實上，耶穌兩次說：「吃喝他們所供給的」，「給你們擺上什麼，你們就吃什麼。」祂的堅持看起來似乎奇怪，那麼祂為什麼固執於這一態度呢？因為在猶太人和其他民族交往上的一個阻礙正是對非常嚴格的進食規矩的遵守。即使今天，守規矩的猶太人只進 Kosher，即符合梅瑟法律和傳統上規定的純淨的食物。耶穌卻說不要為這些規矩費心思，因為這些規矩是與其他人交往的一個障礙。福音的信使們應該開放、溫和，應該常尋求使人們團結的東西，不接納製造分離的事物。只有在溝通自由的情況下才有真正的平安；要是有一個障礙，就不能談平安。實際上，障礙已經指出了某種程度的對立。

當保祿宗徒說：「天主的國並不在於吃喝，而在於義德、平安以及在聖神內的喜樂。」(羅十四 17) 他的話符合了耶穌的這一訓誨。天主願意祂所有的子女在平安、喜樂和愛中生活。事實上，正如第一篇讀經所說，天主充滿了慈愛。讀經一中天主要人們快樂、欣喜，並許下眾多顯示仁慈、慷慨的畫面：「看！我要在她(耶路撒冷)身上廣賜和平，有如河流一般」。

在希伯來文的經書上，我們看到此處用的是 Shalom，通常被譯作「和平」。在意大利主教團的正式譯文中，並沒有用「和平」這個辭彙，而是用了「繁榮」一詞，因為希伯來語 Shalom 一詞不只是沒有戰爭的意思，也指充裕，繁榮。天主繼續：「[我要]賜給她萬國的財寶，好似氾濫的江河。」天主用各種方式和各種慈愛的舉動顯示祂的慷慨：「她的乳兒將被抱在懷中，放在膝上搖擺。」這是一個和平景象：是有小孩子被抱在懷中被搖擺的家庭的景象。由此可知，天主顯示的不僅是父愛，也有母愛：「就如人怎樣受母親的撫慰，我也要怎樣撫慰你們，你們必要在耶路撒冷受安慰。」

在第二篇讀經中，保祿在迦拉達書的結尾也談到了平安。在這篇書信中，他非常致力於辯論，為勸阻讓迦拉達人接受梅瑟法律的戒律所行的分離行動。保祿宗徒不贊成讓來自異教的基督徒屈服於梅瑟法律有區別的規定下。他為使他的信徒們擺脫對法律的遵守所出現的憂慮而奮爭，因為這些法律製造阻礙分離。在這些分離中，尤其是其他民族所不實行的割損。為此他表示：「割損或不割損都算不得什麼，要緊的是新受造的人。」

天主的慷慨、慈愛借著在耶穌復活後新造的人而體現出來。他們是充滿平安的新受造物和平安的傳遞者。保祿說：「以此為規律而行的，願平安與憐憫降在他們身上，即降在天主的新以色列身上！」

保祿宗徒要求，從今以後，沒有人再煩擾他，並指出了在他身上帶有耶穌的烙印的理由。他願意被視作同情的對象，不是歧視或爭論的目標。最後他祝望：「弟兄們！願我們的主耶穌基督的恩寵，常與你們的心靈同在！」

保祿在他的書信的開端常用「恩寵」和「平安」，這兩件事是放在一起的。「恩寵」是天主白白賜予的愛，經由基督賜給了我們並給我們帶來了「平安」：首先與天主平安，然後才有我們良知上的內心的平安，與其他所有人的平安，因為他人是天主的子女，故有權利得到我們的愛。教會的普世傳教是和平的使命，這個使命該當懷著巨大的信心永遠傳下去，因為它符合天主的願望和基督以高貴的代價使我們獲得的救贖的功效。