

Homily of Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C, 2025

Isaiah 66:10-14; Psalm 66:1-7, 16, 20; Galatians 6:14-18; Luke 10:1-12, 17-20

In the first reading, God appointed Isaiah to prophesy to the Jews. In the second reading, God appointed Paul to preach to the Gentiles. And in the gospel, Jesus appointed seventy-two disciples to preach the good news. In the same way, as Christians, we are appointed as laborers in the Lord's field. Some are appointed to labor as priests and religious. Some are appointed to labor in various other capacities in the Church and in the society.

Indeed, the harvest is abundant, but the laborers are few. This means that there is an urgent need for more laborers. We pray for an increase in priestly and religious vocation so that the master of the harvest may send out more laborers for his abundant harvest. We pray that the laborers may have the missionary spirit, zeal, and disposition commanded by Jesus in today's gospel: "Carry no money bag, no sack, no sandals; and greet no one along the way..." (that is have the spirit of detachment, selflessness, sacrifice, and be focused on the mission). It was with this missionary spirit of detachment, selflessness, sacrifice, and resoluteness that the early missionaries and evangelizers brought the good news to every corner of the world. The early missionaries and evangelizers are a challenge to the present-day missionaries and evangelizers. The affluence of some 'missionaries and evangelizers' who claim to proclaim the good news is scandalous.

The missionary mandate of the Church continues to prosper because of men and women who pray constantly and men and women who make generous financial and material contributions and sacrifices towards the Church's missionary activities throughout the world. May God bless and reward such people of goodwill.

We pray for God's courage, strength, provision, and protection for missionaries who work in difficult and dangerous places. We pray for the fulfilment of the words of Jesus that "... nothing will harm them." These missionaries need our constant prayers and every possible support because they are at risk of harm and death every moment.

Today's gospel reminds us of the great commission of Jesus and his authority to believers. The great commission is to preach the good news, to proclaim peace, to heal the sick, and to drive out demons. The authority to believers is, "Behold, I have given you the power to tread upon serpents and scorpions and upon the full force of the enemy." The commission and authority are not designated for any special class or special group or special people. They are for everyone. We are mandated by the commission and the authority to be missionaries and evangelizers wherever we are so that people will know that we are Christian by what we do and what we say.

At the time of Isaiah's prophecy in the first reading, the Jews had returned from Babylonian captivity to a devastated homeland. They were desolate. Isaiah gave them the prophecy to strengthen their trust in God, who would not forsake them. Despite the situation of Jerusalem, Isaiah encouraged the people to rejoice and be glad.

Through Isaiah, God presents an image of himself as a caring and comforting nursing mother:

“Oh, that you may suck fully of the milk of her comfort, that you may nurse with delight at her abundant breasts! ... As nurslings, you shall be carried in her arms, and fondled in her lap; as a mother comforts her child, so I will comfort you; in Jerusalem you will find your comfort.”

God promises, “Lo, I will spread prosperity over Jerusalem like a river, and the wealth of the nations like an overflowing torrent. ...When you see this, your heart shall rejoice and your bodies flourish like the grass; the Lord’s power shall be known to his servants.” Many people, at the moment, are as desolate as the Israelites were, and are praying and waiting for the fulfilment of God’s promises.

O Lord, according to your word, spread your spiritual and physical prosperity over your children. Afflictions have sapped joy from their bodies, take away the afflictions, and fill your children with joy. May your children flourish again. Visit and clothe and surround your children with power from on high and drive away evil forces and angels of death. O Lord, fulfill your words that your children may testify your goodness and sing your glory. Amen and amen.

Fr. Martin Eke, MSP