

Homily of Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time Year C, 2022

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

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 this prophecy to strengthen their trust in God who had declared that he would not forsake them. Despite the situation of Jerusalem, Isaiah encouraged the people, "Rejoice with Jerusalem and be glad for her, ... all you who were mourning over her!"

Through Isaiah, God presented 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."

The image above is explained in the following words in the first reading, "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 these promises God made to his children.

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 go and preach the good news. In the same way, as Christians, we have been 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. This means that there is 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 as specified by Jesus in today's Gospel: "Carry no money bag, no sack, no sandals; and greet no one along the way..." It was with this missionary spirit, zeal, and disposition that the early missionaries and evangelizers took the Good News to every corner of the world. The present-day missionaries and evangelizers need to rekindle the missionary spirit, zeal, and disposition of the early missionaries and evangelizers.

The missionary mandate of the Church has been possible due to generous men and women who pray constantly and those who make financial sacrifices towards the Church's missionary activities throughout the world. May God bless and reward such men and women of good will.

Although the world is increasingly hostile to Christian beliefs and practices, we will continue to preach the good news of God's kingdom and witness Christ whether welcomed or unwelcomed, and whether the message is accepted or not. We are covered by the divine assurance of Jesus, "Behold, I have given you the power to tread upon serpents and scorpions and upon the full force of the enemy and nothing will harm you." Amen.

Fr. Martin Eke, MSP