

Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Jesus sent out his apostles:

The apostles had been with Jesus for a while, and during that time he had instructed and prepared them, and the time had come for them to take an active part in his ministry. Their mission was an extension of his own mission. They were to help spread the news of the kingdom of God to others. He sent them out in pairs, perhaps, so that they could support one another and learn to work with others; and he empowered them to speak and act in his name.

Christianity has always been like that. It is never something to be kept to oneself, but always involves an outreach to others. And it has been proved over and over again that every person is capable of such outreach.

The mission of the apostles sent out was, first of all, spiritual as they were to preach repentance and the imminent coming of the kingdom of God. But it was also concerned with physical and mental healing. This shows that Christianity is concerned with both the spiritual and physical well-being of people. In other words, with the whole person.

As for personal possessions, they were to bring only the bare essentials. They were to rely on the hospitality of the people to whom they were sent for food and lodgings. This was to show solidarity with the poor, by joining them in their struggles and sharing their poverty.

Much more can still be said, but the message that stands out here is the reminder to us that the gospel still needs to be preached, and it needs all those who accept it, to do so. Jesus' instructions are still relevant for missionaries of today, and we are all missionary disciples (Pope Francis). Though conditions have changed, the basic principles remain the same. They challenge both those whose task it is to preach the gospel, and those to whom it is preached. We are all challenged to be active and not passive followers; to be not only receivers but also givers. It is true that only a few of us are called to actually preach the gospel fulltime like the apostles, but all of us are called to witness to it. We do this principally by living it!

Fr. Sebastine