

HOMILY – 14TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, YEAR C 2016

"After a morning worship service, a mother with a restless seven-year-old boy told her Pastor how she finally got her son to sit still and be quiet. About halfway through the sermon, she leaned over and whispered, *'If you don't be quiet, the Pastor is going to lose his place and will have to start his sermon all over again!'* It worked."

If we read the Gospel of Luke (10:1-24) and Matthew (10:1-42), we will see two accounts of Jesus sending his disciples: the mission of the twelve in the Gospel of Matthew and sending the Seventy in Luke's Gospel. Christian tradition identifies the Twelve apostles with their ordained ministry in the church. When at the Last Supper Jesus commissioned his followers to "*do this in memory of me*" he was addressing the Twelve, the clergy. The gospel account we heard today therefore, is the commissioning of lay ministry. This way we can read the two missions in the Gospel of Luke, the mission of the Twelve and the mission of the Seventy, as the mission of the clergy and the mission of the laity.

What is the reason for lay involvement in the spreading of the gospel?

Because "*The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few.*" (Luke 10:2). This is as true in today's context as it was in the days of Jesus.

According to a statistical survey, that out of the seven point four billion population of the world, 33% of these are Christians and 20% of these 33% are Catholics. Accordingly, 77% of the world population are non-Christians or uninfluenced by the gospel.

There are people who have heard of Christ but who have no opportunity to know Him better.

There are people who have known and heard of Christ, baptized and became Christians but who do not practice what they had learned and received. They have relinquished their religion and became nominal and cafeteria Catholic Christians. Who are they? They are your neighbors, members of your own family, friends and many more. It is in this situation that Jesus sends us out with twofold responsibilities.

We, every Christian, have got **twofold responsibilities**:

1. "*Therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest*", i.e., prayer (v 2).

Pray as if everything depended on God, work at it as if everything depended on your contribution.

Just before my Ordination, Fr Paul, our Rector was giving his final instruction. He told us “*Each day when you offer the Mass, say as if you say the Mass for the First time in your life after such long years of aspiration and training, with great passion, and as if it is going to be your last Mass in your life, with great gratitude and love*”. Then he told us, - Pray as if everything depended on God, work at it as if everything depended on your contribution.

2. “*Go on your way. See, I am sending you*” (v 3), i.e. **active involvement**.

Every Christian is called to **participate** in the spreading of the message of Christ through a commitment of prayer and a commitment of action. Many of us would remember when no automatic dishwashers were there at home. After each meal ... “NO, it’s YOUR turn to wash...HER turn to dry and MY turn to put the dishes away ... always the bickering about whose job it was to do. It’s the same with the church as well. Our church is a family, just like our own individual family. Unless everyone takes up some part of the task, things just don’t get accomplished. We all are members of one family.

Jesus places special emphasis on the work of curing the sick. This is not an optional task in the work of spreading the gospel. As we participate in Jesus’ ministry we will heal people from their emotional, psychological, spiritual and physical infirmities by our presence, prayer and even with a warm smile. There is a saying that ‘*A wounded animal is a dangerous animal*’ which is applicable to human beings as well. Only if I am person of peace I can pass it on to others and liberate them.

Let us start preaching the Gospel in our families by leading exemplary Christian lives, in which spouses love and respect each other, raise their children in the spirit of obedience and service, discipline them with forgiving love and teach them by persistent example to pray, love and help others by sharing their blessings.

Dear friends, we are not called just a father, a mother, a lawyer, a doctor, an engineer, a businessman, an employee, governor, mayor or councilors. But we are called to be a Christian father, a Christian mother, a Christian lawyer, a Christian doctor and many other roles to witness Jesus and his gospel.

Fall down or failure is not a failure in itself. But is a failure if I fail to get up from where I fell down or failed.