

Homily July 14, 2024

15th Sunday in Ordinary Time: Spreading the Gospel

St. Francis of Assisi tells the following story on himself. One day, he suggested to a young monk that the two of them should go into the town and preach. So they walked down to Assisi and passed along its streets until they came to the marketplace. All the while they were talking to each other about their spiritual experiences and insights.

It was only when they were on their way back home that the young monk said in astonishment, "But, Father, we completely forgot about preaching to the people."

St. Francis put his hand on the young monk's shoulder and told him, "My son, remember one thing: it makes no sense to go and preach if one does not preach while he is going."

~ Willi Hoffsuemmer

We all are called to the work of evangelization. The above story suggests that preaching is supposed to be spontaneous or part of our daily life. It is not something we prepare for in a special way – buy a new bible, new cloth, do some research and make few notes.

In the first reading, Amos was a simple shepherd and sycamore tree dresser (Amos 7:14). Yet, God sent him to preach a message of repentance to his people. Jesus involved the apostles in his work. He shared his divine mission with them. He gave them his own authority and power. Most of the apostles were fishermen. Yet Jesus didn't hesitate to share his work with them.

Fr. James Mallon, in his book *Divine Renovation*, opined that many in the authority (Church hierarchy) have the fear of involving people in the missionary work, especially the lay faithful. Hence, people are left with the feeling that they have nothing to contribute in the work of evangelization.

In the real sense of it, it is good for everybody to be involved. It makes us all responsible for the gospel. And it gives many parishioners (lay faithful) the opportunity to use/exercise their talents (Matthew 25:14-28). It builds up a parish community.

But sometimes people don't want to be involved. It's easier to leave it to the experts. The practice of leaving it to the professionals is very common today. Thus:

- all healing is left to doctors and nurses.
- all teaching is left to teachers.
- all the work for the poor is left to the Government or NGOs.
- consequently, everything that has to do with the work of evangelization is left to the priests, Bishops and few others.

Of course experts are needed for specialized jobs. But the non-specialist too has a lot to contribute and often has a warmer heart.

- the sick have as much need for companionship as for medicine (*visiting*).
- the old need someone to spend time with them (*pastoral care*).
- the young need someone to show an interest in them (*teaching them what is right and wrong*).

This is work we all can do. It does not call for any expertise - only a caring heart with a touch of spiritual reflections.

The gospel reminds us today that Christ has made us partners in the work of salvation (Mark 6:13). Thus, a great responsibility has been laid upon us. We are responsible for God's mission in the world. We are coworkers with Christ.

Prayer: Lord, help us to realize that you made us your coworkers in building the Kingdom of God on earth. Jesus, I trust in you.

Fr. Benjamin Ezekwudo