



1) Opening prayer

Lord our God,
prompted by the Holy Spirit,
the church of Antioch sent Paul and Barnabas
on their missionary mission among pagans.
Let your Church everywhere send
good, zealous men and women as missionaries.
Fill them with the Holy Spirit and with faith,
that they may touch the hearts of people
and win them as disciples and friends
of Jesus Christ our Lord.

2) Gospel Reading - Matthew 10,7-13

Jesus said to his disciples: 'And as you go, proclaim that the kingdom of Heaven is close at hand. Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those suffering from virulent skin-diseases, drive out devils. You received without charge, give without charge.

Provide yourselves with no gold or silver, not even with coppers for your purses, with no haversack for the journey or spare tunic or footwear or a staff, for the labourer deserves his keep.

'Whatever town or village you go into, seek out someone worthy and stay with him until you leave. As you enter his house, salute it, and if the house deserves it, may your peace come upon it; if it does not, may your peace come back to you.'

3) Reflection

- Today is the feast of Saint Barnabas. The Gospel speaks about the teachings of Jesus to the disciples on how to announce the Good News of the Kingdom to “the lost sheep of Israel” (Mt 10, 6). They have to: a) cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, drive out devils (v. 8); b) announce gratuitously what you have received gratuitously (v. 8); c) provide yourselves with no gold or silver, no sandals, or staff, no haversack, or two tunics (v. 9), d) seek a house where you can be received until the end of the mission (v.. 11); e) be bearers of peace (v. 13).
- At the time of Jesus there were various movements which, like him, were seeking a

new way of living and of living together with others, for example, John the Baptist the Pharisees, the Essenes and others. Many of them formed communities of disciples (Jn 1, 35; Lk 11, 1; Ac 19, 3) and had their missionaries (Mt 23, 15). But there was a great difference! The Pharisees, for example, when they went on mission, they provided for their needs. They thought that they could not trust the food that people would offer them, because this was not always “ritually pure”. Because of this they always carried a haversack and money so as to be able to take care themselves of what they would eat. In this way the observance of the law of purity, instead of helping to overcome divisions, weakened even more the living of the community values. The proposal of Jesus is different. His method was seen in the counsels which he gives to the apostles when he sends them on mission. Through the instruction, he tries to renew and to reorganize the communities of Galilee in a way that they would once again be the expression of the covenant, an example of the Kingdom of God.

- Matthew 10, 7: The announcement that the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand. Jesus invites the disciples to announce the Good News. They should say: “The Kingdom of Heaven is close at hand!” What does it mean that the Kingdom is close at hand? It does not mean the closeness of time, in the sense that it suffices to wait for a short time and then the Kingdom will come. “The Kingdom is close at hand” means that it is already within reach of the people, it is already “in your midst” (Lk 17, 21). It is good to acquire a new look, so as to be able to perceive its presence or proximity. The coming of the Kingdom is not the fruit of our observance, as the Pharisees wanted, but it becomes present, gratuitously, in the actions which Jesus recommends to the Apostles: to cure the sick, to raise the dead, to cleanse the lepers, to drive out demons.

- Matthew 10, 8: To cure, to raise, to purify, to drive out. The sick, the dead, the lepers, the possessed, were the excluded from living together with others, and they were excluded in the name of God. They could not participate in the life of the community. Jesus orders to accept these persons, to include them. The Kingdom of God becomes present in these gestures of acceptance and including them. In these gestures of human gratuity is shown God’s gratuitous love which reconstructs the human living together and mends interpersonal relationships.

- Matthew 10,9-10: Do not take anything. On the contrary of the other missionaries, the Apostles can take nothing: “Provide yourselves with no gold or silver, not even with coppers for your purses, with no haversack for the journey or a spare tunic or footwear or a staff, for the labourer deserves his keep”: The only thing which you can and should take is Peace (Mt 10, 13). This means that they have to trust in the hospitality and in the sharing of the people. Because the disciple who does not take anything with him and takes peace, indicates that he trusts people. He believes that he will be received, and the people will feel appreciated, valued, and confirmed. The labourer has the right to his nourishment. Doing this, the disciple criticizes the laws of exclusion and recovers the ancient values of sharing and of community living together.

- Matthew 10, 11-13: To live together and to integrate oneself in the community. Arriving to a place, the disciples have to choose a house of peace and they should remain there until the end. They should not go from one house to the next, but rather live in a stable

way. They should become members of the community and work for peace, that is, to reconstruct the human relationships which will favour Peace. By means of this practice, they recover an ancient tradition of the people, they criticize the culture of accumulation, typical of the politics of the Roman Empire and they announce a new model of living together.

- Summary: The actions recommended by Jesus to announce the Kingdom are the following: accept the excluded, trust the hospitality, encourage sharing, live stably and in a peaceful way. If this happens then we can and should cry out openly to the four corners of the world: The Kingdom is among us! To proclaim the Kingdom does not consist, in the first place, in teaching truth and doctrine, catechism and Canon Law, but to lead persons to a new way of living and of living together with others, to a new way of thinking and of acting starting by the Good News, brought by Jesus: God is Father and Mother, and therefore, we are all brothers and sisters.

4) Personal questions

- Why are all these attitudes recommended by Jesus signs of the Kingdom of God in our midst?
- How can we do today what Jesus asks of us: do not take with you a “haversack”, do not go from house to the next?”

5) Concluding Prayer

Sing a new song to Yahweh,
for he has performed wonders,
his saving power is in his right hand and his holy arm. (Ps 98,1)