

14th Sunday in Ordinary Time (C)  
(Isaiah 66:10-14 / Luke 10:1-12, 17-20)  
03.07.2022

Dear brothers and sisters,

In the passage from St Luke's gospel read this morning, we see Jesus appointing seventy **two** disciples and sending them out to proclaim the coming of the kingdom of God. This narrative is quite similar to the previous chapter of the same gospel. Therein Jesus commissions his twelve apostles with the identical mission of preaching the kingdom of God.

The 12 apostles are sent to the 12 tribes of the children of Israel. They are sent to preach the kingdom of God to those who belong to the Jewish tradition.

What about the 72? To answer this question, it is interesting to read chapter ten of the Book of Genesis. There, we find an enumeration of all the nations of the world issued from Noah: if we count them we discover that they were 72! So, perhaps 72 is a way of saying 'the whole world'! We know that St Luke writes in a Church which is already open in regard to the pagans. It becomes clear that if the 12 apostles are sent to preach the kingdom of God to the children of Israel, the 72 are sent to the whole world.

We know the names of the twelve apostles. We don't know the names of the 72 disciples. Is this not a way of suggesting that all disciples, each one of us here and now, are included; that we are all invited, like the 72, to preach the Good News of the kingdom of God? By our baptism, we are all called to participate in the mission of the 72 disciples. In consequence, the exhortation given by Jesus to the 72 is addressed to each one of us gathered here for this Sunday Eucharist.

This morning, let us retain just two of the exhortations we hear Jesus give to his disciples. Jesus sends them to proclaim peace to the world: "Whatever house you go into, let your first words be 'peace' to this house". Already in the first reading from Isaiah, we heard the Lord say to Jerusalem: "Now towards Jerusalem I send flowing peace like a river, like a stream in spate". The mission of each one of us is to proclaim peace to the world.

The peace we have to proclaim is not only the absence of conflict, but above all fullness of life: spiritual and temporal blessings we all long for; this peace is what the Jewish tradition calls: Shalom!

To proclaim peace is not only a matter of words, even if it is true to say that words matter and the message of peace has to be preached. More than by exhortation we proclaim peace by bearing witness to it. It is important that the peace we have received from Christ as a gift is made manifest in our way of life, that we give flesh to it by our lives. We proclaim peace by lives which reflect God's peace at work within us.

We all long for peace. But it happens that we look for it in the wrong place. We can run all over the place trying to find something to satisfy our deepest desire, our deepest hunger, our deeper thirst. We can accumulate things; we can try to buy peace: Gathering and hoarding... collecting all we can lay our hands on. We can try to find peace in books or by travel. We can navigate the web for endless hours, looking for we don't know exactly what. We are deeply hungry, thirsty and unsatisfied people. We believe that God alone is able to satisfy our hunger, our thirst, our

unsatisfaction; God alone is able to give us the happiness and peace we long for. But, like St Augustine, we can be looking outside of ourselves for God who in fact is awaiting us within.

Some declare wars to other countries in order to satisfy their thirst for power, for supremacy, for glory or grandeur, in fact to give flesh to their ideologies... They think that peace and happiness will be given to them by military victory... This is a pitiable and costly mirage!

Others have recourse to all sorts of addictions: goods, money, drugs, alcohol, sex, even work: Do we not qualify some people as 'workaholics'... people addicted to work!!

All that can be ways of looking for peace and happiness in the wrong place. Only Jesus who lives within our hearts can fully satisfy our deepest thirst. Only Jesus can give us the peace we long for. If we open our hearts to Christ, to his presence, if we open our hearts to Jesus' Word and if we put his Word into practice, if we open our hearts to the Church and her sacraments, if we recognize Jesus' presence in our brothers and sisters in humanity, if we allow nature to speak to us of its creator, we shall experience fullness of life, the deep and true peace of God, the peace of Jesus, a peace the world cannot give us, a peace that Christ alone can offer us. To proclaim the peace of the kingdom to others is to allow the peace which is within us to transpire, to become visible, palpable to those with whom we live. A heart and a mind inhabited by the peace of God becomes an icon of God and of his peace for the world. This is to proclaim in truth the Good News of Jesus, the gift of his peace. "Whatever house you go into, let your first words be 'Peace' to this house".

Jesus also sends his disciples to proclaim the coming of the kingdom of God. Twice in the few verses of the gospel passage we heard Jesus send his disciples on mission inviting them to proclaim that "the kingdom of God is very near to you". What is the kingdom of God that we are called to proclaim? It is certainly not a geographical space. God's kingdom is where God is king, where He reigns. Where does God reign if not in Jesus who came to do God's will? The kingdom of God is the person of Jesus. The mission of the disciples, our mission, is to proclaim: "the kingdom of God is very near to you". In Jesus, with Jesus, God's kingdom is near to you. The gospel does not say that the kingdom of God has arrived, but that it is near to us. To be in the kingdom, those who listen to the proclamation of God's word have to open their hearts and minds to Christ, to his presence and to his will; they have to consent to welcome Christ within them. If they do so, then the kingdom of God is no longer just near to them; it is present in them and through them. It draws near to others. Those who look at children of the kingdom living their lives are given a glimpse of the kingdom of God in them.

May those with whom we live recognize in us the presence of Jesus, which is the source of all true peace! May they recognize the coming of the kingdom of God in this world in and through us!