

Homily – Luke 10: 1-12, 17-20
14th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C
3rd July 2022. Soeey

On October 11th 1962, on the evening of the Second Vatican Council, Pope John XXIII gave his famous “Moonlight Speech” that touched the hearts of all who were gathered at the Vatican Square to listen him. Amazed at the people gathered there, Pope John XXIII spoke to them with great compassion. And he said:

“Dear sons and daughters, I hear your voices! Mine is just one lone voice, but what resounds here is the voice of the whole world. And here in fact, the entire world is represented tonight. One might even say that even the moon hastens close tonight to behold this spectacle, that is not even St. Peter’s Basilica over its four centuries of history has been able to witness. My own person counts for nothing. It is a brother who speaks to you”. And then he concluded his speech commissioning them with these words: “And so, let us continue to love each other, to look out for each other along the way: to welcome whoever comes close to us, and set aside whatever difficulty it might bring. When you head home, find your children. Hug and kiss your children and tell them: ‘This is the hug and kiss of the Pope’. And when you find them with tears to dry, give them a good word. Give anyone

who suffers, ‘a word of comfort’. Tell them, ‘The Pope is with us especially in our times of sadness and bitterness’. And then, all together, may we always come alive – whether to sing, to breathe, or to cry, but always full of trust in Christ, who helps us and hears us.

Well, in today’s Gospel, Luke describes the fulfilment of the prophetic promise made by Isaiah in Jesus’ commissioning of the 72 disciples to preach the Gospel in towns and villages in preparation for His own visit. Jesus gives the paired disciples “travel tips” for their missionary journey. They must be walking witnesses of God’s providence, relying on the hospitality of others, living very simple lives, preaching the Good News and healing the sick.

And Jesus tells them the following: “The harvest is rich, but the labourers are few” – a very optimistic, yet realistic statement. What a lot of good there is that could be done in the world. But when the chips are down, how few are willing to put themselves out to do it.

Catherine Doherty who was a Catholic Social Worker and the founder of the Madonna House of Apostolate was once traveling in the subway in Montreal. And she was reading a book when the lady across from her, who was quiet elderly, looked at her and said: “You have a very kind face. Now, would you mind talking to me for

a while? I have had flu for the last three weeks, the old woman said, and only a nurse visited me for half an hour. The landlady would bring me a tray, but neither of them spoke very much. I am hungry for conversation. I am hungry for companionship. That is the way I feel”.

Catherine then tells what happened next. She says: “We made two trips from end to end of the subway, talking all the time. Then I invited her to a coffee shop and we became good friends. I did not live in Montreal, but we corresponded until she died, says Catherine. I know that a lot of her loneliness was dispersed, just because there was someone on the other end”.

Well dear friends, ‘the harvest is rich indeed, for those who have eyes to see it’. And most of the time we do see it. But maybe, we make excuses unlike Catherine who went the extra mile and we might say: “Well, I have no time, I have so much to do”. And so, the harvest is not reaped.

When Jesus looked out at the world, he saw that the harvest was great, the opportunities many, the need pressing, and the time ripe. And this could even be truer in the present world. How much need there is today of the good news of hope and salvation, of peace and healing, of joy and communion? The harvest is there, everywhere, even in the most unlikely places.

It is in our institutions: in our hospitals, homes, schools, prisons. It exists among all kinds of groups of people. The sick, the old, the suffering, the prisoners, the addicts, the young...how many are deeply wounded and in need of healing...how many are without hope, how many without love...Everyday is a harvest day and in every place, there is a harvest to be reaped for Christ.

Let me conclude my homily with a little anecdote: Story is told of a chaplain who was serving on the battlefield. He came across a young man who was lying in a shell hole, seriously wounded. "Would you like me to read something from this Book, the Bible?", the Chaplain asked this young man. But the soldier responded saying: "I'm so thirsty; I'd rather have a drink of water". Hurrying away, the Chaplain soon brought him some water. Then the wounded man said, "Could you put something under my head?" The Chaplain took off his overcoat, rolled it up and gently placed it under his head for a pillow. "Now", said the suffering man, "if I just had something over me – I'm cold". The Chaplain immediately removed his jacket and put it over the wounded man to keep him warm. Then the soldier looked at the Chaplain straight in the eye and said, "if there is anything in that book that makes a man do for another all that you have done for me, then please read it, because I'd love to hear it".

Well, my dear friends, if my actions do not speak of Gospel values, be sure my words never will. What affects most people is often caught, rather than taught. Indeed, we are the only book on Jesus Christ that others may ever read!

As Saint Teresa of Avila writes:

Christ has no body but yours,
no hands, no feet on earth but yours,
yours are the eyes with which he looks
with compassion on this world.

We are invited each day dear friends as Pope Francis tells us to become the face of God's mercy to everyone we encounter in our lives.

God bless you all, **Amen.**