

18. October 2019

“To take care of the Gospel”

Feast of the Holy Apostle and Evangelist Luke

Lk 10,1-9

After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them out ahead of him in pairs, to all the towns and places he himself would be visiting. And he said to them, "The harvest is rich but the labourers are few, so ask the Lord of the harvest to send labourers to do his harvesting. Start off now, but look, I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. Take no purse with you, no haversack, no sandals. Salute no one on the road. Whatever house you enter, let your first words be, "Peace to this house!" And if a man of peace lives there, your peace will go and rest on him; if not, it will come back to you. Stay in the same house, taking what food and drink they have to offer, for the labourer deserves his wages; do not move from house to house. Whenever you go into a town where they make you welcome, eat what is put before you. Cure those in it who are sick, and say, "The kingdom of God is very near to you."

The feast of an evangelist invites us to reflect on the ever valid and right way of preaching the gospel. There are some believers in the Catholic Church who are worried that the gospel will be not proclaimed in full authority. The concern is unfortunately not unjustified, because the attempts to proclaim the Gospel in a more modern way, and thus more adaptable to the world are obvious.

There is no doubt that it is right to examine the Gospel preaching in the light of new circumstances that need to be considered to reach out to people. Take, for example, the question of how we as Christians should deal with the environment. Many people are concerned about the increasing pollution and are wondering how to approach such issues from the perspective of faith. The question is justified and one will come to the conclusion that the creation of God is entrusted to us and that we have to deal with it carefully. This can then lead to further considerations and actions.

But our own vigilance as Christians will not be simply fraternized with a general ecological movement, but we will know to distinguish how far these issues are to be treated as a consequence of our christian thinking, or where they end in ideological aberrations or as a quasi substitute religion.

This topic touches a broader spectrum. I have taken it only as an example because it finds in the current Amazon synod - and beyond - great attention. One can get easily the impression that the gift of discernment of the spirits is not sufficiently applied by some members of the synod in order to separate the theme from exaggerations and thus to quickly become ideologized.

When turning to these questions, there is a slight danger that the spiritual value system will change. Man takes center stage and the question of God will be more in the background. One no longer tries to understand the particular situation to be judged in the light of God, but often purely rational considerations come to the fore, and lately even irrational mystifications can happen.

In today's proclamation, the essential contents of the faith has been transmitted: salvation in Christ, the true doctrine, the proclamation of the commandments of God, the last judgment, heaven, hell, purgatory, responsibility before God and man, the duty of the confession of the faith, the necessity of the Holy Sacraments, the dignity of Holy Mass, the path of holiness, the salvific dimension of the Catholic Church, everything that makes our faith so deep! In today's proclamation, it is also necessary to give the warning of the real dangers threatening the Christians and this world, to teach the right way of dealing with the world, the warning of the wolves who are coming in the vineyard of the Lord.

Only if the basic proclamation of the faith does not undergo restriction and relativization one turns in the right way to the secondary questions and ask for directions from the Holy Spirit.

We can be grateful if the priests still proclaim the authentic teaching of the gospel. But how often does this clear proclamation take place today, and instead cares primarily for worldly things, gives advice on a human behavior, avoids the burning questions of faith!

How easy it can be today, that those who not only hold on to the right doctrine of the Church, but also implement it practically in their pastoral ministry, are called rigid and backward.

However, the gospel should not be watered down! It is the proclamation of salvation in Christ. This applies to all people, including those Indians who live in the Amazon and wherever people are still waiting for salvation. The disciples were sent out as sheep among the wolves, to proclaim, to heal, to deliver the possessed and thus to present the kingdom of God, which comes to men in Christ.

There will be no help für anyone if the gospel would be "amazonized" in a misunderstood and ideologically charged inculturation, and they would introduce or tolerate even non-religious practices. This would lead to the falsification of the faith and weaken the Catholic Church more and more in their authenticity.

It is for us Christians to be vigilant if we realize that those who are called to teach slip off the path. We should pray for them and if it possible to help them to correct the path, but not to get irritated by false teachings.