

14. February 2020

**“The light in the world”
St. Cyril and Methodius**

Acts 13,46-49 (Reading from the memory)

Then Paul and Barnabas spoke out fearlessly. 'We had to proclaim the word of God to you first, but since you have rejected it, since you do not think yourselves worthy of eternal life, here and now we turn to the gentiles.

For this is what the Lord commanded us to do when he said: I have made you a light to the nations, so that my salvation may reach the remotest parts of the earth.' It made the gentiles very happy to hear this and they gave thanks to the Lord for his message; all who were destined for eternal life became believers. Thus the word of the Lord spread through the whole countryside.

In the early Church, as well as in later times, there was still a deep conviction that the gospel should be carried to the ends of the earth.

The two brothers Cyril and Methodius were completely fulfilled by this mission and evangelized the Slavic world. Despite some resistance, a liturgy in the Slavic language emerged. With the decision made by the Pope at that time, the liturgy was allowed to be celebrated also in languages other than Latin, thus avoiding a certain narrow-mindedness that could occur in this sense. A balanced relationship between fidelity to tradition, combined with the flexibility to listen to the guidance of the Spirit, should distinguish the Church.

Today, the main direction the Church has taken, seems to have strayed into a primarily modernist vision. If the Church is no longer led by the Holy Spirit and does not hold fast the truth and the mission entrusted to her, then she becomes a plaything of the "spirit of time"; a leaf blown by the wind... This "spirit of time" (Zeitgeist) is by no means Christian; rather, in many respects, it is increasingly anti-Christian.

Let us rather return to the words of Holy Scripture. To understand them better and to allow ourselves to be formed by them is a true renewal, since they are the Word of God, and not merely human reflections.

In terms of the history of salvation, then, it is a matter of carrying the light of the nations to the ends of the earth. For this, however, a firm conviction is needed that

for all the people of the world the encounter with Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is necessary for salvation. Certainly this includes the fact that, to those people who did not have the joy of truly meeting the Redeemer while still alive, God can grant the grace of Jesus in other ways, which only He knows. But this must in no way be an obstacle to the mission! In this respect, all speculations and considerations that hinder the inner impetus of mission must be rejected. For example, if it is said that all religions correspond in the same way to the will of God, as it is written in the "*Document on Human Fraternity*" of Abu-Dhabi, then the urgency and the impulse of the mission would be lost.

Neither in the Apostle Paul nor in Cyril and Methodius, who announced the Gospel in word and deed, can we identify a lessening of this dynamism!

Why should God today have changed his commission?

Surely one can always find new ways of proclaiming the Gospel, as well as to learn from past mistakes or one-sidednesses and try to avoid them.... But if we are no longer convinced that Jesus is the way, the truth and the life for all people (*cf. Jn 14,6*), then we will hardly be guided by the Spirit of God; as He is the one who reminds us of everything that Jesus said and did (*cf. Jn 14,26*), and would also bring to our memory those words of St. Paul we have heard in today's reading.

Let us, therefore, take seriously the Lord's words and also the Church's declarations right up to recent times, and let us not allow ourselves to be lulled to sleep and paralyzed in our efforts to carry the Gospel to people, each one according to the way he has been entrusted!

The Gospel must be proclaimed in word and deed, whether it is convenient or inconvenient (*cf. 2 Tim 4,2*)! Just as the proclamation of the Gospel acquires credibility when it is accompanied by works corresponding to faith and love, so also the works require the word of the Gospel, so that people may know who is the Author of all the good deeds, and God may be praised and glorified (*cf. Mt 5,16*). Let us not be confused by the "spirit of the times", even less so if it has infiltrated the Church!