



Homily Notes

July 3, 2016: XIV Week of Ordinary Sunday

Is 66:10-14c; Gal 6:14-18; Lk 10:1-12;17-20

Peace to this House

This passage of sending the seventy - describes a wider mission than the first mission of the twelve. Seventy two is a symbolic number. In the book of Numbers, seventy two elders were chosen to help Moses in the wilderness Num 11; 16-17; 24-25). It was the number of the Sanhedrin, the supreme council of the Jews. And thirdly, it was held to be the number of nations in the world. Luke was the man with the universalist view and it may well be that he was thinking of the day when every nation in the world would know and love his Lord.

The one and the only mission of the Seventy two was to proclaim the Kingdom of God, i.e. peace and love. All the religions have tried to establish peace in the world from the time immemorial. It is said that human history can be traced back to 3400 years and about 3166 years, the humans had been engaged in war and the remaining 234 years, occupied in preparation to the war. There was never a so called year of peace. The war was very common at the time of Jesus as well. Therefore Jesus emphasizes that the chosen ones must go to the whole world proclaiming peace to each and every human being. In order to make this ministry a successful one. He gives some guidelines in today's gospel. They are as following.

The preacher must not be cluttered up with the material things – It is easy to get entangled with the material things of this life and to lose the sight of the mission for which one is sent.

The preacher should concentrate on his task – He must not spend time in greeting others. It is not an instruction to discourtesy rather it means that the

man of God must not turn aside or linger on the lesser things while the greater things call him/her.

The preacher must not be in the work for what he can get out of it – He is to eat what is put before him and must not move house to house seeking better and more comfortable quarters.

The preacher should not be proud of his abilities – This was the very reason why the arch-angel was thrown out of heaven – the presence of God. It will always remain true that a man's greatest glory is not what he has done but what God has done for him.

Jesus further instructs them that whatever house you enter, first say, "Peace to this house". God is the source of peace and therefore only God can grant us the true peace. Thus says the Lord, "I will extend prosperity to her like a river, and the wealth of the nations like an overflowing stream and you shall nurse and be carried on her arm and dandled on her knees" (Is 66:12). St. Paul prays for the Galatians, "As for those who will follow this rule – peace be upon them, and mercy, and upon the Israeli of God" (Gal 6:16).

-Dn. Vikas Jason Mathias

July 10, 2016: XV Sunday of Ordinary Time

Deut 30:10-14 Col 1:15-20 Luk 10:25-37

Neighbours Without Borders

Catherine Booth, co-founder with her husband William Booth of the Salvation Army, was an electrifying preacher. Wherever she went, crowds of people went to hear her message of hope: princes and nobles, beggars and homeless people. One night, after preaching in a certain city, a certain well-placed lady invited Mrs. Booth to dinner. The lady's words of welcome as she arrived were: "My dear Mrs. Booth, that meeting was dreadful." "What do you mean, dear?" asked Mrs. Booth. "Oh, when you were speaking, I was looking at those people opposite to me. Their faces were so terrible, many of them. I don't think I shall sleep tonight!" "Why, dear, don't you know them?" Mrs. Booth asked. "Certainly not!" the hostess replied. "Well, that is interesting," Mrs. Booth said. "I did not bring them with me from London; they are your neighbours!"

The Golden Rule, "**Love your neighbour as yourself**" (Luke 10:27) which we hear in today's gospel is not just a Christian thing. Every conceivable religion and culture in the world has the Golden Rule in one form or another. Here is a sampling:

Judaism: "What is hateful to you, do not to your fellow man. That is the law: all the rest is commentary."

Islam: "No one of you is a believer until he desires for his brother that which he desires for himself."

Hinduism: "This is the sum of duty: do naught unto others which would cause you pain if done to you."

Buddhism: "Hurt not others in ways that you yourself would find hurtful."

Confucianism: "Do not unto others what you would not have them do unto you."

If the Golden Rule was so well-known in ancient cultures why then did Jesus spend so much time teaching it as if it was a new thing? It is because Jesus taught a completely new understanding of the commandment. The Golden Rule is understood differently in different religions and cultures. And the key to its understanding lies in the question that the lawyer asks Jesus in today's gospel, "**Who is my neighbour?**" (v. 29). Who is my neighbour that I have an obligation to love?

Among the Jews of Jesus' time there were those who understood "neighbour" in a very limited way. The Essenes of Qumran, for example, required new members to swear to love the sons of light and hate the sons of darkness. For them, your neighbour is the one who shares the same religious persuasion as yourself. Other groups, such as the Zealots, would understand neighbour to include only those who shared the same nationality and ethnicity with them. The average Jew would not regard the Samaritan as a neighbour. They are outsiders and the circle of neighbourly love does not include them. Jesus came into a world of "we" and "them," "we" being the circle of those recognised as neighbours, and "them" being the rest of the world regarded as hostile strangers and enemies of the people.

The new thing in Jesus' teaching of neighbourly love is his insistence that all humanity is one big neighbourhood. Thus he broke down the walls of division and the borders of prejudice and suspicion that humans have erected between "us" and "them." To bring home this point he tells the story of the Good Samaritan. This man regarded as Enemy Number One by the Jewish establishment simply because he is Samaritan, is the one who finally proves himself to be neighbour to the Jewish man in need. Thus to the question "Who is my neighbour" Jesus' answer is: Anyone and everyone without exception.

The lady who invited Mrs Booth to dinner understood her "neighbour" to be limited only to those on her social and economic level. Mrs Booth reminded her that her "neighbour" should include the nobodies of society. Like this lady, we all need to be reminded that the Christian understanding of "neighbour" admits of no borders. Today is the day to identity and tear down all the borders we have erected between those who belong to us (and are, therefore, deserving of our love and concern) and those who don't (those others who can go to hell). Sometimes these walls of division are religious in nature, as in the case of religious intolerance, or in the mutual distrust and hatred between those who call themselves "conservatives" and those who call themselves "liberals." Other times they are ethnic and racial, as in the bad blood between Blacks and Whites in places like apartheid South Africa or between Serbs and ethnic Albanians in Kosovo. They could also be social and economic, as in the divide between suburban neighbourhoods and the inner-city. The gospel today challenges us all to dismantles these walls. This way we work with Jesus to realize his dream of the world as a neighbourhood without borders. --**Munachi E. Ezeogu, cssp**

July 17, 2016: XVI Sunday of Ordinary Time

Gen 18: 1-10, Col 1: 24-28, Lk 10: 38-42

Communitarian and Catholic

One of the hallmarks of being a Christian is our attitude towards hospitality. In the scenario of India, we are well-known for our institutions that provide health care, education and social service. If we begin to enumerate the works done in this field, the list will be endless. The question posed in today's liturgy of the Word is: What is true hospitality?

It is undoubted that Abraham was a generous host in Gen 18:1-10, where he prepares a sumptuous feast for the three guests that arrived at the entrance of his tent. Sarah must have been a gracious host too. But the point to be noted is that the three strangers understood the pain that was lying dormant in the hearts of this old and childless couple. As they prophesy, it strikingly reveals to us: Who was more hospitable?

St. Paul reminds us that understanding the pain of others and working towards it has a price to be paid. In Col 1:24-28, St. Paul expresses his willingness to go that extra mile for Christ and participate in the suffering of Christ by accepting his own pains and suffering. St. Paul does not want Christ's message to be a mere Neo-Judaism, but pushes the boundaries away and realises that the true potential of Christ's message is for all people.

The Word of God is for all people, irrespective of skills, status or dispositions.

As we shift our focus towards the Gospel Lk 10:38-42, Jesus is headed towards Jerusalem, the epicentre of his mission. He might have had to fight a great battle in his mind as he pondered on the imminent suffering and the brutality that would have to undergo in order to redeem humanity. As a human, he might have yearned for the rock of strength and comfort as he enters the house of Martha and Mary at Bethany. While Martha was cooking and fussing about the sumptuous meal she was about to present, Jesus wanted the warmth of understanding, someone who could listen and empathise with his emotional turmoil. Mary was there, being present as a support and assurance to go on. There is no doubt that Jesus loved both contrasting temperaments of activity and quietness, but the question for you is once again: Who was more hospitable?

In life, we too make huge efforts to show our kindness. Sadly, we try to show our kindness and empathy the way we want and not the way it is needed according to the situation. It is high time that we reassess our idea of hospitality and understanding. Do our charitable works spread the message of Christ to the people who really need him? Does our charity and service allow the poor to be empowered or do we continue helping them to remain poor and needy? Is our service to the society a mere calendar of events or does it really cater to the needs of the society? Do we make distinctions while we cater to the needs of the people whom we serve? Do we really understand the pain of the people whom we serve?

The best form of hospitality is to understand the pain of one's heart. A nuclear bomb can be heard millions of miles away and its effects are seen for centuries, but the heart of a person in pain and suffering doesn't make any sound neither are the effects glaringly seen. We, as followers of Christ, are called to see beyond the masks of the people and perceive the reality of the people whom we serve. We are called to be there with our presence being a testimony that we are communitarian, whole, universal and Catholic.

-Dn. Romel D. Saldana

July 31, 2016: XVIII Sunday in Ordinary Time
Eccl 1:2; 2:21-23, Col 3: 1-5, 9-11, Luke 12:13-21

Focus on the Eternal Values

Everything that we see in and around us will someday come to an end even as the beautiful thought in Buddhism goes; This Too Will Pass Away. There is an end to all that exist including human relationships. The world we live in is an uncertain world where we cannot anticipate a second of what comes next. There is uselessness in the storage of possessions while depriving the other of their basic wants. The first reading of today speaks of vanity of vanity because everything will pass away! We never know who would benefit from our hard work. In the process of being a workaholic, we miss even to live our lives.

Hoarding is one of the greatest sins in the world of today. There are people building their fortune at the cost of the other, not knowing who would possess them after they are dead and gone. Paul in his letter to the Colossians encouraged them saying that our focus should be on Christ. If Christ is our focus, we should look on the things that are above; the eternal values. Earthly possessions take us away from the domain of God. They take the place of God.

The gospel of today speaks to us about the uncertainty of our lives. So, there is no point in storing up for the unknown. It is best to share what we have with our neighbours because tomorrow is not in our control. The readings of today exhorts us with the message of sharing. Let us not postpone the good things that we can do for the other because tomorrow may not be ours

-Dn Vekupa Rhakho George

August 7, 2016: XIX Sunday in Ordinary Time
Wis 11:6-9; Heb 11: 1-2, 8:19; Lk 12: 32-48

Being the Good Waiter

The Gospel passage of the day teaches us the three characteristics of a good waiter and the blessedness of it. I doubt that there is anything I dislike more than waiting. It may be that you can identify with me in my annoyance with waiting, especially when it is prolonged awaiting someone's arrival. Husbands sometimes come to church in a mental "miff" because they have sat in the car, waiting for wife and/or family to get out to the car. Wives can

get upset waiting for their husband to get home from work, especially if they have dinner in the oven getting extra crispy or on the table getting cold.

Jesus calls upon His disciples to wait, for although He will return to the earth, to rule over it as Messiah, it may be a considerable period of time before this happens. Our text implies that there will be a wait. History confirms this, for the church has been waiting nearly 2,000 years for His return.

The entire 12th chapter of Luke focuses on stewardship. The opening verses explain the disciple's stewardship of the gospel. The disciple must make good use of the gospel by boldly living and proclaiming it. Followed by the stewardship of possessions. Our preoccupation must not be with material things, but with true "life." We need not worry about our life, but we should use things to minister needs of human beings and Jesus asks us to store up treasures in heaven. It is possible only if implement the will of God in every moment of our life. He also instructs the disciples to be good stewards of the time. If we are required to wait, then you and I had better learn how to do it right. In our text, Jesus teaches us "the way to wait" for His return. In verses 35 and 36 Jesus spells out three elements involved in waiting, three descriptions of the readiness for and expectation of His return which we should have at all times. Finally in Verses 37 and 38 he promises of the blessedness of those who wait as He has said in the Gospel. Verses 39 and 40 contain words of warning, for some do not wait in readiness for His return.

"Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning, like men waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet, so that when he comes and knocks they can immediately open the door for him.

"There are three distinct characteristics of the "good waiter" as described by our Lord:

- (1) Preparation—"be dressed ready ..."
- (2) Maintenance—"keep your lamps burning"
- (3) Expectation—"[and be] like men waiting for their master"

The preparation of the waiter consists of a readiness for action. In the imagery of our Lord it has to do with one's clothing. Literally, one is to be ready by "having their loins girded. One could hardly work with a flowing robe in the way, so it would be tucked in. In our culture we might say, "having your sleeves rolled up."

Second, the “good waiter” is to “keep his lamp burning.” They did not have street lights in those days, nor did they have a porch light to keep on, so that the master could easily find and enter his door. The good servant would listen for the sound of his master’s return and would have his light already lit, so that he could illuminate and thereby facilitate his way. So, too, with the disciple who awaits the Lord’s return. One’s waiting should be spent making all the preparations needed, so that the Lord’s return is not surprise, and so that we can be a part of the return.

Third, the “good waiter” is to be like a devoted servant, who eagerly awaits his master’s return, as if he were coming from a wedding banquet.” If we are good waiters Jesus will serve us at his dining table.

-Naijo Chittilappilly

August 14, 2016: XIX Sunday in Ordinary Time
I Jer 38:1-2,4-6,8-10 II Heb 12:1-4 III Luk 12:49-53

Holy War according to Jesus

The new millennium has witnessed and continues to witness much violence. Hardly any day passes that we do not hear the sad news of violent aggression and brutality unleashed against innocent people somewhere around the world. To make matters worse, perpetrators of these acts of violence often try to justify these atrocities by claiming that they are fighting a holy war in God’s name. Think of the crusades, the Middle East, Ireland, Bosnia, and the Taliban. Today’s readings are indeed a call to war, not a war against other people but a war against sin, against evil, against the devil.

Let us listen to these words of Jesus:

Do you think that I have come to bring peace to the earth? No, I tell you, but rather division! From now on five in one household will be divided, three against two and two against three; they will be divided: father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law. (Luke 12:51-53)

Scholars tell us that Jesus is speaking here not about the purpose of his coming but about the inevitable consequence of his coming. Jesus came to reveal the true sons and daughters of God who listen to his word, and the children of this world who are opposed to his teaching. This divides all men and women into two camps, the camp of the godly and the camp of the ungodly. There is perpetual conflict, a state of war, between these two

groups as one group strives to raise the world up to God and the other to pull it down to hell. These two groups do not exist in two different parts of the world. Rather they live side by side in the same neighbourhood, they live together under the same roof, and in fact the forces of good and evil often exist together in the same person. The holy war to which Christ calls us, therefore, is not a war against people of certain nationalities or cultures, creeds or ideologies, but a war in which we first have to identify the forces for evil in our own persons and in the persons of those who are dear to us (father, son, mother, daughter, mother-in-law, daughter-in-law) and then declare an uncompromising war against these forces.

What are some of these evil forces that we are asked to war against? Well, why don't we start with the Seven Deadly Sins: Pride (superiority complex), Covetousness (greed, seeking material prosperity at the expense of one's soul), Lust (sexual abuse of minors, pornography, treating women as objects of pleasure), Anger (animosity, bitterness, hate), Gluttony (unnecessary eating and drinking), Envy (self hate, rivalry), Sloth (seeking success without working for it). To these we can add the mother of all evils, injustice. If we declare war against these then we are fighting a holy war.

If we are at war then we should be prepared for some roughness. The enemy is also fighting against us and we may have to suffer some harm or hardship. Jeremiah in the first reading was fighting a holy war against the false prophets who prophesied only what the king and his officials wanted to hear. But Jeremiah stuck to the truth. And where did he end up? In a well of mud. But God sent a foreigner, an Ethiopian to come and save him. God never abandons His people. Jesus, our leader in God's holy war did not escape the suffering and death on the cross. But on the third day God raised him to life victorious. God never abandons his people. He will not abandon us if we fight His holy war — the war against evil in ourselves and in the world.

With this thought that God never abandons his own, the author of Hebrews encourages us in the second reading to not grow weary or lose heart. We shall close with his words of advice:

Consider him who endured such hostility against himself from sinners, so that you may not grow weary or lose heart. In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. (Hebrews 12:3-4)

--Munachi E. Ezeogu, cssp

August 21, 2016: XXI Sunday in Ordinary Time
Is 66:18-21/ Heb 12:5-7, 11-13/ Lk 13:22-30

Strive to Enter through the Narrow Door

The Gospel today speaks in terms of predestination, of those who will ultimately be saved. Jesus is steadily making his way to Jerusalem passing through many towns and villages. It seems that at this time he is on the east side of the Jordan, on his way to Jericho and Jerusalem.

Jesus is approached by a man who wants to know if only a few will be saved. One has the feeling that he expects the answer to be 'Yes' and that he regards himself as being among the chosen ones.

Jesus does not answer the question directly but he implies that those who are saved are not necessarily those who regard themselves as God's chosen ones but rather those who walk a certain path in life. That path, of course, is precisely what he is proposing through his own life and teaching. It is a narrow door, he says, which many will not be able to enter.

Jesus warns that we can be excluded if we do not *strive to enter through the narrow door*. What did Jesus mean by this expression? The door which Jesus had in mind was himself. *I am the gate; whoever enters by me, will be saved* (John 10:9). Through the cross Jesus opens the way for us to enter into his kingdom. But we must follow Jesus in the way of the cross. The word *strive* can also be translated *agonize*. To enter the kingdom of God one must struggle against the forces of temptation and whatever would hinder us from doing the will of God.

The irony of Jesus' image is that entering through the *narrow gate* denotes a steady obedience to the Lord Jesus - overcoming all opposition and rejecting every temptation. The good news is that we do not struggle alone. God is with us and his grace is sufficient! Through the gift of his body the church and through the support of brothers and sisters in Christ, the Lord gives us all the help we need to grow in holiness and overcome sin in our personal lives. As we *strive side by side for the faith of the gospel* (Phil. 1:27) Jesus assures us of complete victory! Do you trust in God's grace and help, especially in times of testing and temptation? **-Gnanam J.**

August 28, 2016: XXII Sunday in Ordinary Time
Sirach 3:17-18, 20, 28-29, Hebrews 12:18-19, 22-24a, Luke 14:1,7-14

Called to a Life of Humility

Christianity is a way of life that calls each one to lead a life of simplicity and in utter communion with God. Go opposes the proud and uplifts the
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