

MISSION

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Homily of Saturday, 6th Week of Easter, June 4, 2011

Acts 18:23-28; Ps. 46; John 16:23-28

“He powerfully confuted the Jews in public, showing by the scriptures that the Christ was Jesus” (Acts 18:28).

In our day, we are more sensitive to the good in other religions, from which we have learned much. We have learned something about meditation from Zen, the use of a mantra or prayer word or phrase for contemplative prayer from Hinduism, and a greater appreciation of the importance of asceticism from Hindu *sadhus*, the holy men of India. At a time when many Christians have forgotten about our own ascetical and contemplative monastic tradition, our new contact with the contemplative and ascetical religions of Asia has helped and renewed us in many ways. (See my article, “Indian Asceticism,” on my website under OTHER WRITINGS/Asceticism). We now know that we can and should value, appreciate, and accept all that is good in other religions and learn from it.

At the same time, as Christians, we have an obligation to proclaim to non-Christians the revelation that God sent to the world in his only Son. He became incarnate only once for the sake of the whole world, to save us from our sins by his death on the cross and to justify us by his resurrection (Rom. 4:25). Missionaries are sent out to proclaim the salvation of God in Jesus Christ who “died for our sins” (1 Cor. 15:3).

To inspire us today in our duty and obligation to preach Christ and his saving death in a clear and explicit way to non-Christians, we have the example of Apollos, an Alexandrian Jew, well versed in the scriptures and an eloquent man, who believed in Jesus Christ (Acts 18:24-25). “He powerfully confuted the Jews in public, showing by the scriptures that the Christ was Jesus” (Acts 18:28). He clearly and powerfully preached God’s salvation in Christ to the Jews. If we base ourselves on the scriptures, this is what we have to do, especially those of us who have a missionary vocation. We must always proclaim the salvation that we ourselves have received in Christ and that has changed and enriched our own life. Like Apollos, we should preach it in a clear and explicit way, so that others can clearly understand it and come themselves to full faith in Christ.

We cannot content ourselves to leave the rest of the world in darkness concerning God’s revelation to the world in his only Son, trusting that their own religions will be sufficient for them. This would be most unbiblical! God sent his only Son into the world only once in incarnate form, and this Son sent his disciples into the entire world to preach the gospel to every creature (Mark 16:15). A missionary is someone who dedicates himself to this explicit preaching, if it is possible to do, so that many might be illuminated now in this present life and know the one who saves them from their sins and gives them eternal life.

No one is saved without Christ (Acts 4:12; John 14:6). The death of Jesus Christ on the cross is the only way by which God saves man. Although God can bring those who have not yet heard of Christ to the faith which is necessary for salvation by ways that he

alone knows, it is his will that the disciples of Christ preach Christ and his saving death in a clear and explicit way to all whom they can reach. The risen Christ sent his apostles to preach the gospel to the whole creation (Mark 16:15) so that many might come to explicit faith in him and know in a clear and personal way him who saves them (Matt. 28:19-20).

As Christ sent St. Paul to preach the gospel to the Gentiles, so does he send his missionaries today, and he tells us the same thing, namely: I send you to the Gentiles “to open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me” (Acts 26:18).

God called us out of darkness by his Son and he now sends us to illuminate those who still do not personally know his Son, so that they too might be “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light” (1 Pet. 2:9).