

# THE MISSIONARY LIFE

Fr. Steven Scherrer, MM, ThD

Homily of Monday, 11<sup>th</sup> Week of the Year, June 13, 2011  
2 Cor. 6:1-10, Ps. 97, Matt. 5:38-42

“As servants of God we commend ourselves in every way ... as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing, as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything” (2 Cor. 6:4, 10).

Today St. Paul gives us a sketch of his apostolic life, spending himself completely for Christ. Many who saw him thought that he and his companions had a sad life, always traveling, with no fixed abode (1 Cor. 4:11), in “beatings, imprisonments, tumults, labors” (2 Cor. 6:5). Yet he says that they are “always rejoicing” (2 Cor. 6:10), for Christ is their life, and he unites them to God and expiates their sins.

Others considered the apostles to be poor, always proclaiming Christ and the salvation of God that is in him through his death on the cross for our sins by means of our faith in him. Although many followed them, many others persecuted them, until St. Paul said, “I think that God has exhibited us apostles as last of all, like men sentenced to death; because we have become a spectacle to the world, to angels and to men ... we have become and are now, as the refuse of the world, the offscouring of all things” (1 Cor. 4:9, 13). But in their poverty, they are “making many rich” (2 Cor. 6:10).

They are enriching many by their preaching and proclamation of Christ, for they announce that it is now possible to be reconciled with God, for one has died for all and instead of all (2 Cor. 5:14-15) so that we do not have to die for our sins. Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, did that for us. If we put our faith in him, trusting in the merits of his vicarious death for us, we will be justified and saved. We should repent, confessing our sins, and then we will be forgiven, with all our guilt removed. Christ will then make us righteous and resplendent before God. Then we are to live only for him, in every aspect of our life, who died and was raised for us (2 Cor. 5:15), and we will be sanctified. Many were saved and sanctified in this way through the preaching of the apostles. There is no enrichment greater than this. Hence in their poverty, the apostles, through their life of preaching, enriched many (2 Cor. 4:10).

Many thought the apostles had nothing, no fixed dwelling (1 Cor. 4:11), and in the case of St. Paul not even a wife or family. It is true that they had nothing

(Luke 5:11, 28), yet at the same time, they possessed everything, for in possessing Christ, who united them to God and removed their guilt, they possessed all things.

This is the apostolic life, the missionary life. Although St. Paul took up a collection for the poor saints in Judea (2 Cor. 8), and although the apostles in Jerusalem told Paul to remember the poor (Gal. 2:10), the heart of their missionary work was preaching Christ, repentance, and conversion to Christ for the forgiveness of sins and salvation. It is the same today. Missionaries help the poor, building schools, dispensaries, and hospitals, but the heart of their vocation is to preach the salvation of God in Jesus Christ and to plant and build the Church. It is a great error to replace preaching Christ with talks about struggling politically and socially against oppression. This latter can never replace the authentic Christian proclamation of salvation, conversion, and faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.