

THE MISSIONARY VOCATION IS TO PREACH CHRIST TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH

Fr. Steven Scherrer, MM, ThD

Homily of Friday, 4th Week of Easter, May 20, 2011
Acts 13:26-33, Ps. 2, John 14:1-6

“Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but by me’” (John 14:6).

Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, incarnate in the world only once, hung from a cross to serve our death sentence for our sins instead of us, and raised from the dead by the Father after three days as a proof that his sacrifice was accepted and was successful, is the only way of salvation for the whole world, for people of every culture and religion. He is the only way to the Father. “No one comes to the Father, but by me” (John 14:6). It is not possible for a person to be saved, except through Jesus Christ. His teaching is the ultimate truth, and to live united to him is the source of divine life in man. Every person of every age that is saved, is saved through him, for “there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). “No one comes to the Father, but by me” (John 14:6). From the sin of Adam came death and alienation from God; and from the death on the cross of Jesus Christ comes life and reconciliation with God for all who believe in him. “As one man’s trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one man’s act of righteousness leads to acquittal and life for all men” (Rom. 5:18). The justification of all who are saved comes from the death of Jesus Christ on the cross, when they accept it in faith.

The apostles were therefore sent to preach this gospel of salvation to the whole world. “And he said to them, ‘Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation’” (Mark 16:15), and “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 28:19).

All this came from the Father “who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all” (Rom. 8:32). “Christ died for our sins” (1 Cor. 15:3). We follow in the footsteps of the apostles, to whom the angel said, “Go and stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this Life” (Acts 5:20). How important it then is that Jesus Christ be known by the whole world, so that each person may hear the gospel of life in his name and have the opportunity to believe in him for

his justification and salvation, so that his sins may be forgiven by accepting Christ in a personal way, trusting in him for his righteousness. Such is the will of God and of Jesus himself. He therefore sent his apostles to the ends of the earth. His salvation was not just for the Jews, but for the whole world, for the Gentiles, for the nations—*ad gentes*. It was not Christ's will just to leave the nations with their own religions, but to evangelize them, to give them the good news of salvation through the death of Jesus Christ on the cross, and to give them the opportunity to believe in him for the sake of a new life in him.

A missionary follows in the footsteps of the apostles and preaches Christ so that all might believe in him and have relief from the painful burden of guilt, which depresses the spirit, and know the hope to which they are called—eternal life with resurrected bodies in the heavenly Jerusalem in the presence of God. This faith also makes a great difference in the quality of life of a person even now in the present, giving him assurance that he is saved and uniting him with the Father by uniting him with Christ sacramentalized in the Eucharist.

How great is the vocation of preaching the gospel to those who have not yet heard it.