

First reading Exodus 19:2-6

‘You shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’

In those days: The people of Israel came into the wilderness of Sinai, and they encamped in the wilderness. There Israel encamped before the mountain, while Moses went up to God. The Lord called to him out of the mountain, saying, ‘Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the people of Israel: “You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself. Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” ’

Responsorial Psalm 100(99): 1-3, 5 R3

We are his people, the sheep of his flock.

Cry out with joy to the Lord, all the earth.

Serve the Lord with gladness.

Come before him, singing for joy.

Know that he, the Lord, is God.

He made us; we belong to him.

We are his people, the sheep of his flock.

Indeed, how good is the Lord,

eternal his merciful love.

He is faithful from age to age.

Second reading Romans 5: 6-11

‘If we were reconciled by the death of the Son, much more shall we be saved by his life.’

Brothers and Sisters: While we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person — though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die — but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

Gospel Acclamation Mark 1:15

Alleluia, alleluia.

The kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.

Alleluia.

Gospel Matthew 9: 36-10:8

‘Jesus called to him his twelve disciples and sent them out.’

At that time: When Jesus saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, ‘The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest.’

And he called to him his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every affliction. The names of the twelve Apostles are these: first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

These twelve Jesus sent out, instructing them, ‘Go nowhere among the Gentiles and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And proclaim as you go, saying, “The kingdom of heaven is at hand.” Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons. You received without paying; give without pay.’

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Feast days this week

Tuesday 16th June: St Richard of Chichester

Friday 19th June: St Romuld

Saturday 13th June: Sts Alban, Julias and Aaron

Cycle of Prayer**Human Life**

especially on the Day for Life (3rd Sunday in June)

Background

The origins of the Day for Life are found in St John Paul II's encyclical *Evangelium Vitae*. Preparation for the day is shared with the Bishops' Conferences of Ireland and of Scotland — though each marks the day on a different date. Since its inception it has focussed on a wide range of life issues.

Prayer

*O God, our past and future hope,
to you a thousand years are like yesterday,
come and gone.*

*Teach us to see the world through your eyes,
to recognise the faults of the past,
and, however dimly, to see the future with hope.*

*Let us seek out the places of hurt
where we can offer your love and compassion.*

*Find the places of darkness and despair
where your mercy can bring light and comfort.*

*May we be heralds of a new world
where every human life is treated with dignity,
where all can live and have abundant life.*

Mission and reconciliation

Mission and reconciliation are prominent topics in the readings. The people of the Old Covenant received their mission through Moses. We, the people of the New Covenant receive our mission through Jesus. What is our mission? We are commissioned and sent to proclaim loud and clear to all and sundry that the kingdom of God has come.

The gospel passage reminds us that Jesus chooses some of his disciples for specific tasks. That is not to say that the others have nothing to do. The whole Church is missionary. Each of the baptised is duty bound to spread the Gospel to the best of his or her ability. There are many ways of doing that. But the basic and most important contribution which we can make is to live a deep Christian life.

Before considering whether or not we are doing anything to spread the Gospel we might consider our attitude towards the project. Do we think about the matter? Jesus sent the apostles because he had compassion on the crowds. There are millions who have never heard of Christ. How does that fact impinge upon us? Do we regard it just as a fact or do we accept it as a challenge? Do we in any way share Christ's compassion and give expression to it? St John Chrysostom wrote: "Nothing is colder than a Christian who does not care for the salvation of others." Today's gospel may well be a call to us to break out of our little ice cubes.

The harvest is the Lord's. God will provide but he must be asked to do so. God sends workers in answer to prayer. That was the first thing Jesus told the disciples. Work without prayer will be fruitless. Paul was aware of that. In his letters he often asks for prayers that God would bless his missionary work. St. Thérèse of Lisieux was an enclosed contemplative nun. Her short religious life was spent in prayer, household chores and penance. She offered her life and prayer for the missions. After her death she was proclaimed Patroness of the Foreign Missions. A strange choice at first sight. Yet a powerful reminder that they also serve who "only" kneel and pray. A reminder too that one way of fulfilling our obligation to spread the Gospel is by remembering the missionary work of the Church in our daily personal prayer. Many generous people are prevented by circumstances from engaging in missionary work. There is nothing to prevent people from praying for the spread of the Gospel. Indifference to the salvation of others is an unacceptable excuse for not doing so.

Jesus gave the apostles power over evil spirits. He gave them power to heal. The exercise of those powers was to be a clear sign that announced the presence of the kingdom. Satan was being challenged and defeated. The apostles worked many miracles. In our day the miracles may not be as frequent or as evident but the power is there in the Church. Every Christian is called upon to be an influence for good in society. The presence of the kingdom is announced, Christ's mission is continued and extended when we bring the compassion of Jesus into the lives of others. Through our ordinary daily contacts with people especially with the lonely and rejects we can and ought to be instruments of acceptance, reconciliation and healing. We don't have to go on the foreign missions in order to do that. For most Christians the home, the parish, the work-place are the mission territories where they have to spread the Gospel message as best they can.

When the human race turned aside from God, God did an extraordinary thing. On his own initiative, motivated by sheer love, he sent his only Son to die for us. The death of Jesus achieved our reconciliation. We are now friends of God. Paul exults in this. We have proof of God's love for us. He urges us to cast doubts aside. Now we have firm grounds for hoping that God will find us righteous in his sight. Like Paul, we too have a mission. We are to be "ambassadors for Christ." Ambassadors ought to be builders of what they announce. We joyfully announce reconciliation. That involves consistently helping our sisters and brothers by our good example to be reconciled to God and to one another. associationofcatholicpriests.ie