

Sunday Homily

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

3 JULY 2022

YEAR C

“He said to them, ‘The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest.’”

Luke 10:2

Illustration

As runners crowd excitedly towards the start of the London marathon, there’s an atmosphere of celebration – the perspiration comes later! Yet it’s also a culmination of many months of training. Such training is costly: the recommended four runs a week (three forty-minute jogs and a longer one at the weekend) will have their impact on a runner’s diet, social life and other interests, as well as their comfort. After all, who wants to step out on a wet, cold evening? As race day approaches, it increasingly influences the runner’s daily life. Yet for the dedicated, the marathon is worth the sacrifice.

Fr Pedro Arrupe, SJ, observed that “What you are in love with, what seizes your imagination, will affect everything.” Whatever our passion, from sporting activity to another person, an ideal or a cherished ambition, it claims our full attention, putting other things into perspective. And it needs to: if we are too easily distracted away from our goal, we may lose out on what is really important. Marathon runners cannot afford to train casually if they want to stay the course on the day.

Gospel Teaching

When it comes to what matters, what could be more vital than spreading the good news of God’s kingdom? As Jesus sends out the seventy, their mission is as urgent as it is important. He is now well on his way to Jerusalem and the climax of his ministry: sealing God’s ultimate victory over evil through his death and resurrection. Jesus instructs his disciples to devote themselves to their task. They are not to be distracted by lengthy greetings on the road or indulgent socialising at their destination: they are to stay in one house only. They are not to carry possessions, wealth, or even a spare pair of sandals, but merely go as they are. Such simplicity will not only keep the disciples focused, but also remind them of their dependence on God’s provision.

Jesus is fully aware of his disciples’ vulnerability, describing them as lambs going out amongst wolves, but the need to rely on divine rather than human resources is vital. The disciples are to be engaged in urgent kingdom work, proclaiming God’s salvation for all. The message of the prince of peace, who offers reconciliation at

every level, will be life-giving for those who respond, whilst those who choose to turn their backs on the living God will face the deathly consequences. The disciples are to underline any rejection of God's invitation by "shaking the dust off their feet". In Jesus' day, strict Jews returning to Palestine from abroad would rid their footwear of any defiling Gentile mud picked up on their journey. Thus the disciples' action will illustrate that those who spurn God's message are placing themselves outside the company of his people.

The disciples are not just one more group of itinerant preachers: the inauguration of God's kingdom is now imminent, and they are its appointed heralds. As they preach, heal and cast out demons, they will express Christ's victory over the evil one, whom Jesus sees being defeated even as they exercise their ministry. Perhaps the disciples glimpse this glory on their mission, as they return in delighted amazement at their first-hand experience of God's power and authority. But Jesus warns them not to let the excitement go to their heads: however dazzling their temporary spiritual achievements, their eternal citizenship in heaven is the real cause for rejoicing.

Application

Do we get distracted in our discipleship? We often have good intentions as we seek to follow our Saviour. Yet we can so easily find ourselves sidetracked on the way. Our Gospel passage reminds us that the work of God's kingdom is of supreme importance – ultimately a matter of life and death. We need to take time to attend to eternal priorities amidst our everyday pressures.

If we feel daunted by our call to proclaim Christ's love and salvation, we are in good company. The disciples, too, were ordinary, frail folk. Serving Christ will take us out of our comfort zone, where we become all too aware of our human limitations. Yet that can be the very place where we are ready to draw upon God's resources, and discover just what he can do through us when we have the courage to go for him as we are, not as we'd like to be.