



03. October 2019

„To keep the distance to the world“

*Lk 10, 1-12*

*After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them out ahead of him in pairs, to all the towns and places he himself would be visiting. And he said to them, 'The harvest is rich but the labourers are few, so ask the Lord of the harvest to send labourers to do his harvesting. Start off now, but look, I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. Take no purse with you, no haversack, no sandals. Salute no one on the road. Whatever house you enter, let your first words be, "Peace to this house!" And if a man of peace lives there, your peace will go and rest on him; if not, it will come back to you. Stay in the same house, taking what food and drink they have to offer, for the labourer deserves his wages; do not move from house to house. Whenever you go into a town where they make you welcome, eat what is put before you. Cure those in it who are sick, and say, "The kingdom of God is very near to you." But whenever you enter a town and they do not make you welcome, go out into its streets and say, We wipe off the very dust of your town that clings to our feet, and leave it with you. Yet be sure of this: the kingdom of God is very near.' I tell you, on the great Day it will be more bearable for Sodom than for that town.*

„The harvest is rich but the labourers are few“. It's true! So many people are yet to be reached through the gospel! Although it has been proclaimed in many areas of the world, more people live without any knowledge or very little knowledge of the gospel. There is still so much to do, and looking at the number of workers in the vineyard, it looks like it's not enough. The Lord then gives us the advice to ask for

workers for the vineyard of God. We should pray instantly that the Lord send us good workers, those who are in love with the gospel and who know how important it is for all people to experience salvation in Christ!

Those workers should pay particular attention to what the Lord says to the disciples as he sends them out to all cities and villages:

*See, I send you like sheep in the midst of wolves! (Mt 10,16a)*

This word does not fit with many of today's tendencies in the Church to be all too willing to see and acknowledge the good throughout the world and to lose the critical distance to the world.

The church is called to be leaven in the world (*cf. Lk 13,21*), to penetrate her with the Spirit of God, and not to let herself be penetrated by the world. So if I am sent as a sheep among the wolves, then I must be aware of the danger that waits for me and surrounds me. It must be clear to me that I have to deepen my "sheephood" in Christ more and more, so that I can distinguish the voice of the Lord from the voice of the wolves, which may be disguised as sheep (*cf. Jn 10,3-5*).

In the Apocalypse, we even encounter an animal that looks like a lamb, but speaks like a dragon (*cf. Rev 13,11*), and we are reminded by Scripture that the devil in the form of an angel can come to us:

*"No wonder, for even Satan camouflages himself as an angel of light" (2Cor 11,14)*

While it is true that the church can not be closed in herself, one has to remain to be very vigilant in the mission of evangelization and must not be guided by a kind of human optimism that does not properly assess the situation of evangelization and, under certain circumstances takes on worldly habits!

It is a great spiritual art to be in the world and yet not of the world! (*cf. Jn 17,11.16*).

Of course, we must not move in a way among humans, as if they were all wolves who want to tear us apart and therefore are in a constant defensive position. It takes a subtle mind of distinction to notice when the Spirit of the Lord guides us and exhorts us to be vigilant. This alertness does not allow us to lose ourselves in certain situations and even to deal with the world in a kind of fraternal familiarity.

Perhaps the term "canonical distance" will help us to realize the peculiarity of the Christian in the world! By canonical distance, the priest should understand that he needs vigilance in all his efforts to evangelize, especially toward the female sex. He can not be too familiar with women, because he should not be too strong emotionally attached to them and thus lose the necessary distance. His innermost bond belongs to God, which prevents him from indulging in temptations that could endanger his celibacy. Caring for the relationship with God is the most important thing for him.

This can now be transferred to the disciples and thus also to us: the world is not the place where we can move about without distinction of the spirits. It is the place where we have to be and try to live and preach in the spirit of the gospel. The wolves are the dangers that surround us, namely to let us be infected by the spirit

of the world, to fall into the traps of the devil and to be slaves of our own false desires.

Alertness does not mean being fearful and closed, but knowing the dangers and to deal with them in the Spirit of the Lord!