

22. September 2021

## The simplicity of a disciple

Lk 9:1-6

***'He called the Twelve together and gave them power and authority over all devils and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal. He said to them, 'Take nothing for the journey: neither staff, nor haversack, nor bread, nor money; and do not have a spare tunic. Whatever house you enter, stay there; and when you leave let your departure be from there. As for those who do not welcome you, when you leave their town shake the dust from your feet as evidence against them.'*** So they set out and went from village to village proclaiming the good news and healing everywhere.'

The Lord gives authority to the disciples! Authority is not the same as earthly power; rather, it refers to spiritual acts and comes from God.

It is therefore important that the Church acts in this authority that has been given to her; and that she does not interfere in the struggles for earthly power. The temptation to power is very subtle, and one must be very vigilant not to succumb to it, especially in the ecclesial sphere. The higher the position of authority one holds, the more it must be exercised with love and humility, so that unhealthy power structures do not arise, which unfortunately can also manifest themselves in the exercise of spiritual authority.

In today's Gospel, we see how Jesus instructs his disciples for their ministry of exercising authority. They are to have nothing to take with them on the journey, i.e. they are not to rely on any earthly power, but their support and impetus is to act in the mission they have been given. This is precisely the treasure of the disciples: total abandonment to God, who will give His own all that they need for the fulfilment of their mission.

This is a lesson also for those who serve in evangelisation. The inner disposition to live in an intimate relationship with God, so that His Spirit can work in us, is fundamental. External things are only means. What is essential is the simplicity of the one who proclaims, as the Apostle to the Gentiles gives us to understand:

*"When I came to you, brothers, I did not come with any brilliance of oratory or wise argument to announce to you the mystery of God. I was resolved that the only knowledge I would have while I was with you was knowledge of Jesus, and of him as the crucified Christ. I came among you in weakness, in fear and great trembling and what I spoke and proclaimed was not meant to convince by*

*philosophical argument, but to demonstrate the convincing power of the Spirit, so that your faith should depend not on human wisdom but on the power of God.” (1 Cor 2:1-5)*

This means that it is the truth that has convinced the hearer, and the more we are penetrated by it, the more we will step back behind this truth, letting it take centre stage.

Today's text leaves us with two other important teachings:

The mission of the disciples is accompanied by signs and miracles. The gospel tells us that Jesus “*gave them authority and power over all demons and to cure diseases*”. In our work of evangelisation, we should ask the Lord that this aspect also resurfaces in our time and is present in the proclamation. Signs and miracles are not only to show people God's providential love, but also to awaken faith.

Finally, Jesus' last instruction to his disciples is also very important. If the message of the Gospel is not accepted, the journey must be continued. The proclamation of the Gospel is not compatible with any form of violence or coercion. It is its very clarity and beauty, together with our witness of life, that must win people over. And if this does not happen, we will have to look elsewhere, wherever the Lord sends us.