

The Twelfth Sunday of Ordinary Time - 21st June 2020 - St. Matthew 10 v 26 – 33

In this Year of God's Word/The Year of the God Who Speaks, we are taking a closer look at the Gospel of St. Matthew. Our study was "interrupted" by the special Sunday Gospel and Epistle readings for Lent, Holy Week, Eastertide, Pentecost, Trinity Sunday and Corpus Christi, but today we return to the Gospel of St. Matthew which we shall continue to follow through the remaining Sundays of Ordinary Time to the Thirty-Third Sunday (15 November), the week before the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe, and the end of the liturgical year when we shall then turn to the study of the Gospel of St. Mark in the year following.

We left St. Matthew's Gospel in chapter five, looking at the Sermon on the Mount, and at how St. Matthew presents Jesus as the One whose Life is the fulfilment of Old Testament prophesy, and that Jesus is the New (and Greater) Moses, indeed, seated on the Mount of the Beatitudes, Jesus is the Same God Who spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai and thus has the authority (which no mere man can have) to expand the Mosaic Law ("you have heard that it was said....but I say to you...) applying it not only to our outward actions and behaviour but to the thoughts and desires of the heart.

In today's Gospel (10 v 26 – 33), having called to Himself the twelve disciples (10 v 1 – 4), Jesus now sends them out as "apostles" (meaning, "those who are sent") a name which He Himself had already given to them (St. Luke 6 v 13), in anticipation of their mission which in today's Gospel He now confers upon them. He incorporates them into His Own Ministry and gives them authority to preach the Good News, to exorcise evil spirits and to heal the sick but (as in the Ministry of Jesus) their first responsibility is to preach the Good News (to evangelise) and the miracles they perform are simply to be accompanying "signs" to validate and affirm the truth of what they teach and to encourage faith in those who, perhaps for the first time, begin to ask themselves (as the disciples themselves has asked), "What sort of Man is this that even the winds and the sea obey Him?" (St. Matthew 8 v 27).

So, chapter ten (see also, St. Mark 6 v 7f; St. Luke 9 v 1f) is a "turning-point" in the relationship between Jesus and the Twelve. They are turned around and sent out. Later on, there will be another "turning-point" in their relationship (at Caesarea Philippi) when Jesus begins to teach the Apostles, for the first time, that their ministry (like His) will not be all victories of conversions, exorcisms and healings but – in sharing His Ministry – they must also share in His Sufferings. (St. Matthew 16 v 21f).

This passage speaks to us also - in this Year of the God Who Speaks! Co-incidentally, when Archbishop George launched the Year of the God Who Speaks, he also inaugurated the **Diocese of Menevia School of Evangelisation and Catechetics**. In other words, he invited us, as followers and disciples of Jesus, to become "apostles" and to discover our "apostolate" in the life of the Church - to bear witness to our Faith as part of the way we live (and, perhaps, to suffer with Him).

Pope St. Paul VI in his magisterial letter "*Evangelii Nuntiandi*" (Evangelisation in the Modern World, 1975) states that witnessing to Christ, "is not an optional contribution for the Church" (para 5) but requires, "a total interior renewal which the Gospel calls *metanoia*; it is a radical conversion, a profound change of mind and heart" (para 10). He goes on to say that, evangelising is in fact the "deepest identity" of the Church. "She exists in order to evangelise" (para 14) – "she is linked to evangelisation in her most intimate being" (para 15) – " BUT (!) she begins by being evangelised herself" – " she has a constant need of being evangelised" – " by constant conversion and renewal" (para 15).

Once again, therefore, we are confronted with our need of supernatural aid because conversion and renewal are the Work of the Holy Spirit and so, if our apostolate is to transform the world in which we live, it can only come about as we allow (and pray for) the Holy Spirit to transform us – in that New Pentecost for which Pope St. John XXIII prayed, on the eve of the Second Vatican Council, "Renew Your wonders in this our day, as by a New Pentecost.....Come, Holy Spirit in Your Power and Might, to renew the face of the earth".

In this Year of God's Word we return again and again to joining in prayer with the Apostles and Our Blessed Lady for the coming down of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1 v 14; 2 v 1f) in a New Pentecost so that the Holy Spirit (as in the days of the early Church) may fall afresh "on us, just as at the beginning" (Acts 11 v 15). Come, Holy Spirit!