

Reflection for the Twelfth Sunday of the Year

Some messengers say they have ‘good news’ and ‘bad news’ and ask which would you like first? As Christians we say we have ‘good news’ and by that we mean the Gospel about Jesus Christ who demonstrates to each person how much God loves us. But sometimes we find that the ‘bad news’ is that some others don’t want to hear the ‘good news’! The prophets from the Old Testament seemed to have had a much harder time though, like the Prophet Jeremiah from our first reading. He must find the faith to tell his people that they would be punished for their sins, which would lead to their exile. It causes him a personal crisis, but God pulls him through. We too have a responsibility to witness. Pope Francis makes this clear: *“In our day Jesus’s command to ‘go and make disciples’ echoes in the changing scenarios and ever new challenges to the Church’s mission of evangelisation, and all of us are called to take part in this new missionary ‘going forth’. Each Christian and every community must discern the path that the Lord points out, but all of us are asked to obey his call to **go forth** from our own comfort zone in order to reach all the ‘peripheries’ in need of the light of the Gospel.”*¹

In the Gospel Jesus tells his disciples *“What I say to you in the dark, tell in the daylight.”* This ‘going forth’ with the good news can be done in a variety of ways and settings and it covers formal and informal activities. So, it is certainly part of being a Catechist such as on First Holy Communion or Confirmation programmes. But it would include all those conversations we may have with people where questions of faith arise. Also included are the activities we do on behalf of the vulnerable, the poor and the environment. This ‘going forth’ can certainly be carried out from home in the form of prayer and dialogue with others. In the Gospel Jesus says:” *Do not be afraid* “. This implies that there will be challenges for those engaged in mission. Pope Francis has identified indifference as one of them. It is probably the one we face most, when we do our bit of going forth. For example, whilst people may say they do not believe in God or are unsure about his existence that does not mean we understand who it is they do not believe in. They may have an image of God we could not accept or even recognise. So, a challenge, yes, but we may be able to help to clarify through our reaching out to those peripheries. Although success, as we think of it, is not assured as God may have other ideas.

It is always the Holy Spirit who brings forth the fruit of our labours and not always in ways that we see or expect. Listen to Pope Francis encouraging us always to make the effort in mission of the Church. He says *“We can know quite well that our lives will be fruitful, without claiming to know how, or where, or when. No single act of love for God will be lost, no generous effort is meaningless, no painful endurance is wasted. All of these encircle our world like a vital force. Sometimes it seems that our work is fruitless, but mission is not like a business transaction or investment, or even a humanitarian activity. It is not a show where we count how many people come as a result of our publicity; it is something much deeper, which escapes all measurement. It may be that the Lord uses our sacrifices to shower blessings in another part of the world which we will never visit. The Holy Spirit works as he wills, when he wills and where he wills; we entrust ourselves without pretending to see striking results.”*² Why make the effort? Because when we do, as Pope Francis says, the Holy Spirit will work along side us with great power enabling God’s love to encircle the world.

God bless you,

Canon David

¹ Evangelii Gaudium paragraph 20

² Evangelii Gaudium paragraph 279