

## Ordinary 27- B: Monday

Franciscan Sisters of the Eucharist

8 October 2018

Dear Sisters:

### *Introduction*

On this Canadian Thanksgiving Day – which packs not nearly the emotional and festive wallop as does Thanksgiving in the United States (many, if not most, had their turkey meal yesterday) – it is, nonetheless, a time to give thanks to the Lord for the blessings he has showered upon us: the big ones like faith, family and a free nation; but also those that are more personal or particular.

Today opens for me the opportunity to express my gratitude to God for inspiring the Franciscan Sisters of the Eucharist to establish a foundation here in the Archdiocese of Vancouver. Your presence, Sisters, is an enormous blessing, and I thank you for “re-gifting” to us the gift of the consecrated life which you have received from the Lord and are now sharing with us. Added to the witness of your consecrated life lived in fidelity and joy is the fruitfulness of the various apostolic endeavours in which you are engaged. You bring to these activities not only competence but evangelizing zeal. And so, it is fitting for me to express on behalf of the whole local Church a great big thanks for being here.

### ***Brief Word on the Gospel of the Good Samaritan***

Although today's Gospel is one of the best known and most consequential in the life of the Church – indeed, in the life of a culture formed in the Christian tradition – I am going to leave it to your reflection, especially to think of those whom you might have cast into a box of not being your “neighbour” and so can vilify and even slander them with impunity.

It does not take too intense a look at public and even ecclesial discourse to see resurrected in practice the so-called righteous who look upon others as the Jews looked upon the Samaritans. If only we could always hear Jesus say to us that we are “neighbours” to the outsiders – however we may cast them, because like the Good Samaritan, we will have shown “mercy” to them (cf. Lk 10:27).

### ***Galatians: “Receiving the Gospel”***

Now to today's selection from the Letter to the Galatians, from which we shall be reading for the next two weeks. It begins with an extraordinarily strong affirmation that there is only one Gospel of Jesus Christ, one which can be relied on. St. Paul asserts in the strongest language that “the gospel that was proclaimed to me is not of human origin: for I did not receive it from a human source, nor was I taught it, but I received through a revelation of Jesus Christ” (Gal 1:11-12). He insists on this so forcefully because, even then, right in the very first

generation of the Church, there were those who were “confusing” the Galatian Christians who wanted “to pervert the Gospel of Christ” (Gal 1:7).

Not only is Paul concerned with what we now call the “orthodoxy” of the faith, but also with establishing his own credentials as an “apostle” called by God, even though he did not fulfill the requirements of knowing Jesus in the flesh and encountering him in his post-Resurrection appearances, conditions imposed on the selection of Matthias, for example. Tomorrow we will read how firmly he was convinced of the legitimacy of his claim to be a herald of the truth of the Gospel: “But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and had called me through his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not confer with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were Apostles before me, but I went away into Arabia; and again I returned to Damascus” (Gal 1:15-17).

Paul’s selection as an Apostle and his insistence on the truth of the Gospel he has received contains much thought on how we consider the particular ministry or apostolate we carry out in the Church.

Paul holds that there are three characteristics that mark being an Apostle, and, I think, apply analogically to us, called to be apostles in a secondary but real sense.

First of all, it is the Lord who appoints to the apostolate and not one's own presumption or even one's own gifts. Because Apostles are not made by themselves but made such by the Lord, they need to relate constantly to the Lord. Not without reason did Paul say that he was "called to be an apostle" (Rm 1:1), in other words, "an apostle – not from men nor through human means, but "through Jesus Christ and God the Father" (Gal 1:1). This is the first characteristic: to have been called by Lord.

The second characteristic of an Apostle is "to be sent." The same Greek term *apostolos* means, precisely, "sent, dispatched"; that is, as ambassador and bearer of a message. The Apostle must therefore act as having been charged and so as representing a sender. It is for this reason that Paul describes himself as an "apostle of Christ Jesus" (1 Cor 1:1; 2 Cor 1:1), that is, his delegate, placed totally at his service, even to the point that he also calls himself "a servant of Christ Jesus" (Rm 1:1).

Let's always remember that what we are doing in our apostolic works at all times comes from the initiative of God in Jesus Christ, to whom we are fully indebted. When we have received a mission from the Lord, then every personal interest becomes absolutely secondary.

The third requisite of the original Apostle is the task of "proclaiming the Gospel," and for them this meant the consequent foundation of communities of Christians. Like the first Apostles, this

means for us that proclamation – our work of evangelization – involves concretely and even dramatically our life.<sup>1</sup>

Acutely feeling the problem of the Gentiles, of the pagans, to know God, who in Jesus Christ Crucified and Risen offers salvation to all without exception, Paul dedicated himself to making this Gospel – literally, the “good news” – known, to announcing the grace destined to reconcile men with God, self and others.

Paul understood that this Gospel did not concern only the Jews or a certain group of people, but one that had a universal value and concerned everyone, because God is the God of everyone.<sup>2</sup>

Pope Francis, following upon his predecessors, has given us a significant push in this direction. We are not to be self-referential, going out only to the like-minded, but to “go forth” and fulfil our responsibilities as first-responders to the wounded who need the healing of the field hospital, which is the Church.

This brings us back, full circle, to the parable of the Good Samaritan, an ever constant reminder of our calling to seek out and find those who are lost and in need of the Good Shepherd.

---

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Benedict XVI, General Audience (10 September 2008).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Benedict XVI, General Audience (25 October 2006).

## ***Conclusion***

Let us pray in thanksgiving today for the fruitfulness of the mission we have each received in their own way to be an “apostle” who bears witness to the truth of the Good News revealed and handed on to us, and which commits us to its proclamation in all that we say and do.

And may the celebration of this Eucharist give us the grace to respond ever more generously to this magnificent vocation!