



15th Week in Ordinary Time 14 July 2024

Reflection by Mgr Daniel McHugh

“Jesus....began to send them out in pairs” (Mark 6:7)

We are very conscious in these times of the changing situation politically: we are fortunate at home to have had a smooth transition from one party to another in Government. On the other hand we see uncertainty in France, and even more worrying we are conscious of the threat of all-out war with Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. How should the Church react in the face of these developments? Some would say: *“keep out of politics.”* And yet, when we look ahead to the month of August we see the Intention of the Pope’s Worldwide Prayer Network (the Apostleship of Prayer) is: *“For Political Leaders: we pray that Political Leaders be at the service of their own people, working for integral human development and for the common good, especially caring for the poor and those who have lost their jobs.”*

In the Apostolic Exhortation ‘*Evangelii Gaudium*’ on the Proclamation of the Gospel in today’s world, Pope Francis writes *“An authentic faith always involves a deep desire to change the world, to transmit values, to leave this earth somehow better than we found it.”* Paolo Ruffini in an Editorial in the Vatican Newspaper L’Osservatore Romano of 8 July refers to Father Primo Mazzolari, a Parish Priest and influential figure in the field of Catholic Social Teaching, saying he *“translated all this by inviting all of us to look up: not to the right or left, or to the centre, but high up. Starting with being men and women who are capable of freely taking on themselves and honouring a commitment rather than behaving like Pontius Pilate. People who do not stand watching, on the sidelines, the fight for justice.”* Paolo Ruffini is Prefect of the Dicastery (Department) for Communications of the Vatican (the Holy See) and he was reflecting on Pope Francis’ address at the closing session of the Italian Catholic Social Week in the Northern Italian city of Trieste this past week. Focusing especially on Democracy the Pope said: *“There is indifference, and indifference is a cancer of democracy, a non-participation in political life.”* The Pope continued: *A ‘healed heart’ of democracy requires creativity, he said, citing examples of how the Holy Spirit has been at work in economics, politics and society to strengthen a sense of community. The Pope highlighted in particular the inclusion of people with disabilities in the workforce; communities promoting renewable energy practice; policies that increase birth rates, jobs, education, accessible housing and mobility; and the integration of migrants. Such issues, he said cannot be addressed on a political level without people’s participation in politics.”*

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The Pope asked Christians to develop a “*politics of love*” and to move beyond polarization, which “*does not help to understand and confront challenges.*” Rather, the role of the Church is to engage people with hope, Pope Francis said, “*because without it we administer the present but do not build the future.*” The Pope concluded: “*Without hope we would be stewards, balancers of the present, and not prophets and builders of the future.*”

Underpinning the Intention for August in the Pope’s Worldwide Prayer Network (Apostleship of Prayer) are the new Statutes guiding this Vatican foundation published on 8 July. There we read “*The Pope’s Worldwide Prayer Network has the mission of mobilising Catholics through prayer and action in response to the challenges facing humanity and the mission of the Church.*” An article in the Vatican News reads: “*The Foundation’s mission is inscribed in the dynamic of the ‘Heart of Jesus’, a mission of compassion for the world.*” (The mission was founded in 1844 at the Apostleship of Prayer. It is present in 89 countries and made up of 22 million Catholics).

This mission reflects the Mission Jesus entrusted to the Apostles in the Gospel for the 15th Sunday (Year B). And Jesus continues to send us into the world as his disciples, that is to share by word and example the good news of the Kingdom where we are called to live the Way of Jesus, love poured out. This is to be lived in many different situations and inevitably it involves repentance, turning from self, pushing beyond our comfort zone. Thinking of the Holy Father’s call to mission in relation to politics I remember all too well my being asked to establish the Diocesan Office of Regeneration for the Archdiocese in 2001. It involved a new way of thinking, especially in regard to involvement with the world of politics, Local Councillors, M.Ps etc. The focus was on bringing the resources of the Church to help resolve problems of life in more deprived areas. Like the first disciples I did not go alone; Jesus gives us the Community of the Church, which strengthens our life of discipleship.

Sunday Connection, the weekly commentary on the Sunday Gospel, concludes its reflection for the 15th Sunday:

“The Christian message can only authentically be proclaimed in and through the Community of Faith that is the Church.”

We thank God for the leadership of Pope Francis in our time.

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