

## 2<sup>ND</sup> SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations..." (Matt. 28:19).

Reflecting on the calling of the disciples and apostles, they were those whom the Lord had chosen. This is described by the Apostle Paul, in the Epistle to the Ephesians: Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him" (Ephesians 1: 3-4). The Gospel also speaks of the appointment and message of the disciples. Jesus appointed twelve to be with Him, and to send them forth to preach. Initially, the disciples were destined to be with Jesus, to be in His presence, and only then to be sent to preach.

Jesus Christ, calling the apostles, chose them to continue His mission on earth, to preach His word to the people, and thus to proclaim God and His love to the world by the word and example of their own lives. Before his ascension, Jesus Christ addressed the apostles with the following words, "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samar'ia and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8). "...pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest" (Matt. 9:38). Workers at God's harvest cannot be sought as an employer seeks people. They must always pray to God and given to Himself to choose them for this ministry. This theological character is further strengthened in the Gospel of Mark, "...and called to Him those whom he desired..." (Mark 3:13). It is impossible to become a disciple yourself. It is the privilege of God's choice. Even today, Jesus calls each of us to become his messengers in the world, but leaves us the choice to accept or reject His invitation.

The evangelist Luke emphasizes, "In these days He went out to the hills to pray; and all night He continued in prayer to God. And when it was day, He called His disciples, and chose from them twelve, whom He named apostles" (Luke 6: 12-13).

To be with Jesus means to be in fellowship with other disciples. The evangelist Matthew reveals to us the meaning of the sermon in some detail, "And He called to Him His twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every infirmity" (Mt 10:1).

Because the world is possessed by the forces of evil, the preaching of the apostles is a struggle against these forces. The calling of the first disciples is followed by the healing of the demon-possessed (Mark 1: 21-28). After the call of the 12 apostles, Jesus is said to have been beside Himself after He is accused of casting out demons by the power of Satan (Mark 3: 20-30).

The evangelist Luke also says, "After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others, and sent them on ahead of Him, two by two, into every town and place where He himself

was about to come" (Luke 10: 1). In the Gospel of Luke, after seventy-two disciples of Christ return from a successful mission and rejoice that the demons have obeyed them, Jesus answers them, "...I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven" (Luke 10:18). The success of the preaching of the apostles leads to the spread of the Kingdom of God and at the same time the liberation of people from the power of Satan, the prince of this world. The apostle Paul writes about the struggle of Christians against unclean spirits in the Epistle to the Ephesians, "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual host of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 6: 10-12). Exorcism and healing are "signs" that point to God Himself and want to motivate man to walk toward God. Only union with Him can be a real process of human healing.

A vocation is a special gift. It first requires you to open your heart to God, the ability to hear God's voice, and to respond to it. To reveal God to others, we must first know God for ourselves and live in His love.

The concept of vocation does not only apply to apostles, saints or clergy. God has called each of us through baptism, to reveal to others, His love and presence in the world by word and, in particular, by the good example of our own lives.

Therefore, this special gift of the Holy Spirit, holiness, is needed to accomplish this task. Holiness is manifested above all in the love of God and neighbor, in the openness of the heart to the voice of God, in the willingness to respond to the voice of God, and to follow Him in the way of God's commandments.

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