

Donnybrook

3 February 2022

Welcome

Yesterday in the Pro-Cathedral, there was a young Brazilian giving a hand in taking down the crib. After Mass, there was time for a cup of coffee. I discovered that Andrew belongs to the Shalom Community – a movement in the church in Brazil. The Shalom Community has a particular focus: youth evangelising youth. He's in Dublin perfecting his English before going to be a lay missionary in Taiwan. The sending goes on today!

Topic

The chance meeting illustrates this morning's Gospel of the sending out. Three dimensions stand out for me.

Steps

We tend to think of the important first disciples as some kind of clerics. But of course they were not. The sending of the twelve is not the sending out of some kind of pro-bishops but simply the sending of twelve disciples – ordinary followers like ourselves. They are twelve because they represent mission of Jesus to the people of Israel, descendants of Jacob and his twelve sons.

The second dimension is that they are to proclaim the very same message as Jesus himself: the kingdom of God. This is much more than simply "God is in charge", God's in his heaven and all's right with the world. It is not all right with the world. For that very reason, Jesus proclaimed God the lover, the compassionate one, the healer. His vision of the kingdom is, as we pray on the feast of Christ the King, a kingdom of truth and life, a king of holiness and grace, a kingdom of justice, love and peace. It is a vision and a programme of life.

The third dimension is even a little shocking: Jesus gives his disciples the very same task that he himself had – victory over the powers of darkness, no less. In the Gospel, it is expressed in the worldview of the day – a world of demon possession. We don't live in that world but of course there is evil and there are forces of destruction. As we proclaim what Jesus proclaimed, we are asked to do what he did, we are called to become what we proclaim. As usual, we have to start with ourselves.

Conclusion

In our immediate context, we are about to walk together the Synodal Pathways. It is no harm to be reminded of the core of the Christian proclamation. In light of that proclamation, we have to discern how God wants us to be as a community of faith so that we best serve the Gospel and offer the world the Good News of Jesus Christ.