

14th Sunday, jr. C., Xavier Church, Isa. 66, 10-14; Ps. 66, 1-7.16.20; Gal. 6, 14-18; Lk. 10, 1-12. 17-20

Fr. Ward Biemans SJ

Dear brothers and sisters, in the first reading from Isaiah we hear how God makes peace flow like a river to Jerusalem. These are words of comfort, addressed to the inhabitants of that city, who had returned after the Babylonian exile. They mourned because they found Jerusalem to be a ruin. Even in our time, the peace we enjoy is very fragile. The European Union and America are making great efforts to help Ukraine with weapons, medicines, welcoming of refugees and sanctions in the war of Ukraine against Russia. It will probably be a long haul. We must continue to pray for peace, also for the many Russians who did not want this war and many of whom are now in prison because they wanted to express their opinions.

In his letter to the Galatians, Paul writes: 'God preserve me from glorying in anything but the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ'. Today, this means that we must make sacrifices, to secure peace in the world in the long term, to prevent a people from being overrun by a violent aggressor and to prevent our freedom from being threatened.

In the gospel we hear that the harvest is great, but labourers are few. This is unfortunately still true in the Church today. In many parts of the country parishes are involved in mergers, with churches being closed. Yet there are signs of hope, among other things through the arrival of seminarians from abroad, who are committed to proclaim God's Word here in the Netherlands. And after a few difficult years during the corona pandemic, the seminaries are also welcoming some Dutch students. This Summer here in the Krijtberg, young people are once again making an effort to welcome visitors and explain to them all the beautiful things that can be seen and experienced in the church. And people can also take part in a short retreat and pray and meditate with biblical texts.

Isaiah's joyful message applies to all times. He exhorted his listeners to keep looking forward, not to throw in the towel, but to allow themselves to be comforted and to be satiated like a child with its mother.

We too can be comforted by our faith in a loving God. When we stand up for faith and justice, we are like the disciples of Jesus. They were sent by Him, two by two.

Those 72 disciples returned to Jesus full of joy, because the evil forces submitted to them. Jesus' response to this is affirmative, but also sober: yes, indeed, I have given you power to rule over all the power of the enemy.

However, do not rejoice in this, but rejoice because your names are written in heaven. Dear brothers and sisters, that is our true comfort.

When we look at the cross, we can accept without bitterness that the role of the Church in our society has shifted from a powerful institution to a more serving role. A Church that stands up for the poor, for the unborn, for people in their final phase of life. A Church that helps people of all ages to strengthen their faith and increase their hope of eternal life. If we make use of all the means available to us, we can succeed in passing on the heritage of the faith to people who are far removed from the Catholic Church, but who are of good will. There is also the next generation, children and young people who often have a very open mind towards the Church and who see that the Church can teach them, for example, how to trust not only in themselves, but also in God. Or how to organise their lives in a mature way, with a marriage and a family. Or how they can engage in solidarity with the weak. Because for them too, the harvest is great, but the labourers are few. Let us therefore ask the Lord to send labourers to harvest, for a society where justice and peace may reign. Amen.