

“Rejoice with Jerusalem and be glad because of her, all you who love her; exult, exult with her, all you who were mourning over her”! These are Isaiah’s words that we have just heard at the beginning of the first reading. It is about an invitation to the happiness given by God.

We are invited to this happiness because Jerusalem is a mother for all of us. Isaiah tells us that we will be nourished and satisfied with the milk of her consolations. This consoling milk is God’s word. Isaiah speaks about peace which overflows like a torrential stream. That peace is not only the absence of conflict; it is especially the fullness of God’s presence, the glory of nations converted to the Lord.

That Jerusalem we speak about is not really the beautiful earthly Jerusalem. This text of Isaiah is a prophecy that is not realized yet. We who are Christians, we understand that it is the Church. She is really a mother for all. She gave birth to us through baptism, She feeds us with God’s word and the Eucharist; She proclaims the heavenly Jerusalem to us. It is toward that eternal gladness that we go. We already have a foretaste of this on earth; it will be fully given to us in heavenly Jerusalem. Our city is in heaven. Saint Cyril of Alexandria says, “In the Church of Christ there is no room for sadness; the Church is rich in hope of life without end and in glory without decline”.

That gladness of the Gospel has to be announced to all. Saint Luke tells us of the sending of the 72. It is a way to say that the Good News has to be proclaimed all over the world. It is for all, for the Christians who do not go to Church anymore, for the teenagers in trouble, for those who ridicule the Christian faith. All people all over the world have to hear and welcome this Good News.

So there is a vast mission that exceeds our human possibilities. However, there is one thing that we should never forget: Jesus sends the 72 to all villages and locations where he would go himself. The mission is not their problem but the Lord’s. It is Jesus who does the essential work in the hearts of men, women, and children that he puts in our path. Without the Lord, nothing is possible.

Saint Luke thinks about those who are the missionaries of communities. It is really the Risen Lord who chooses and sends them to preach the Good News to the ends of the earth. That mission is an extraordinary challenge. Now more than ever, Christians face persecution. Many are killed just because they announce the Gospel to people. But, nothing can stop God’s word or prevent it from producing fruit. It is precisely by seeing the courage of the persecuted Christians that men and women get converted to Christ. We have a lot of testimonies nowadays.

The Apostle Paul shows us the realization of Isaiah’s prophecy. With Jesus died and risen, salvation is offered to all. It is not the result of accumulation of good deeds or merits. It is a free grace of God. The only pride of Paul is the cross of Christ: it is the key that introduces the new creation; it drags us away from all force of sin. At the time of our baptism we became children of God.

By gathering here in this Church, we feed on God’s word and the Eucharist. Then, like the 72, we are sent to announce, “God’s reign is near”. In a world with a lot of challenges, God comes to fill us with his presence and glory. The Gospel insists on the urgency of that mission. Like Christ and like the prophets, we will be confronted with rejection and indifference. But nothing can stop God’s reign from happening. If we encounter wickedness, we will triumph over evil by doing what is good.

Like the prophet Isaiah, may we understand that God’s presence should make us exult with gladness even when everything seems bad. We count on you, Lord: You who send us “like lambs in the midst of wolves”, make us strong in hardships and keep us faithful to the mission you entrust to us.