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## SEDOS Closing Homily

5 May 2023



It never ceases to amaze me how appropriate the daily word of God is for the situations we are experiencing.

As I began to reflect this week on these Readings in

preparation for today, and as I heard the inputs, the reflections, the sharing, I had a great sense that the Spirit of God is at work in and among us ....

This week has been a week in which our faith and convictions have been shared, a week which has generated energy and challenged us to fulfil the responsibilities entrusted to us through new creative, ever-evolving personal and collective responses to the call we have heard to this missionary religious life....

Through new and creative responses to our call – as Fr. Cencini, pointed out the verb “to call” in Italian – *amare* – means ‘to love’, and God, who is love, is at the centre of all – of the call, the response, the mentality, the creative fidelity to the Message, of the Landscapes that are changing and need to be changed ... all is rooted in that love of God that ignites the passion in us to share that love....

The First Reading of today took me back to Tuesday’s discussion on the biblical and theological foundations ....

The Apostle Paul addresses the gathering in the Synagogue in Antioch, the entire community, as – *the children of Abraham as well as others who are God-fearing, stressing that this word of salvation has been sent to them*, (cf. Rom 9: 6-9).

Fr. Ayodele reminded us that with the visit of God, and with the new name of God as YHWH, the criteria for identity within the family of God’s Chosen had changed ... it was no longer genealogical – no longer had the Chosen People to be of the family of Abraham – but all those who are God-fearing.... This was a great change in the landscape of that time ... and is a challenge to us in our time.... What limits do we place on membership and identity in the family of God...?

And Paul reminds the God-fearing people of Antioch that they **are now God’s witnesses before the people.**

As missionaries today, we surely must continue to witness to God’s Message of love before the people and I would say not just before the people but in our entire ecosystem .... A Message that promotes God’s peace, so interconnected with God’s justice, and God’s dream for the communion of all the Created .... Our wounded world is in need of such witnesses....

We have been challenged throughout the week to question ourselves as to whether we truly understand the message of love we have received, if we are passionate enough about the message, if we are respectful enough or even care enough about the other cultures of our day that are also in need of God’s witnesses, (secular spaces, post-Christian spaces, situations of injustice and oppression, so many inhuman situations in our world). Perhaps some of us have found it hard to move into those spaces, to be God’s witnesses in those spaces: perhaps we find it difficult to learn the new languages that can communicate this Message in a way that speaks to them and that they can understand....

But we are called to have faith in God and trust that God will guide us to these new ways....

I feel that one of the key messages this week has been the centrality of hope ... inspite of the changing landscape that can sometimes seem depressing and overwhelming, the ambience this week has been far from pessimistic.... We are people of faith and Hope is our visiting card....

dimension of our lives that will allow us to listen, to see, to hear, to perceive, to be guided by the Spirit of God that is present in each and every one ....

To Be witnesses journeying together ... seeking together where the Way, the Truth and the Life desires to lead us....



In the Gospel we hear Jesus say clearly, ***“Let not your hearts be troubled, believe in God, believe also in me”*** (Mt 12:18,21).

I do not think we are allowing our hearts to be too troubled by the changing landscape... there is a newness in the air. We were reminded this week that this newness is a sign of the Spirit.... Even though many mentioned the reality of the dwindling numbers, there is no need to despair – as one Speaker said, “God is calling enough missionaries for our time” ....

We are all participating in the ***Missio Dei*** and the only way to understand what that Missio Dei is about, is by coming to the Father through Jesus who tells us in today’s Gospel that he, Jesus, is *“the way and the truth, and the life”*, (Jn. 14: 6).

We can only fulfil our call to cooperate in the ***Missio Dei*** as Missionaries by approaching the Father through Jesus – and perhaps this is a challenge for many of us – a landscape of our lives that we must change – devoting more quality time to the more contemplative

The landscape of mission is changing and we are part of that change.... We are not called to worry and be troubled about the finality of that change, of what the future for missionaries will look like, where we will be or what we will do....

Rather we are called to live the mission fully in the here and now, with the same passion and zeal of our first members who risked all, even their lives, for the mission of God that they were so convinced about.... If we live daily, that passion to share the Message in our day, in creative fidelity to God’s dream for our world, truly listening and cooperating with God’s spirit, we will be missionary landscapers, cooperating in God’s dream and thus shaping the change....

Let us all pray for the grace to be missionary landscapers who, rooted in God’s love and convinced of God’s dream, live as authentic witnesses before the people and all of Creation....