



**«I said to God:  
'You are my Lord and without you I have no good'» (Ps.  
16:2)**

*Like Mary, the humble handmaid who gave all to her Lord... We make ourselves available - without reservation - for service to needy youth, becoming a sign of the gratuitousness of love... (Const. 18)*

The Marian icon of Our Lady's visit to her cousin Elizabeth (Luke 1:39-56) has us contemplate how Mary welcomed God's message and began her "pilgrimage of faith," her availability to receive and accept God's plan for her, in the moment she pronounced her "Behold, here I am". **And she set out in haste on the road** from Galilee to Judea to arrive at the village where Zechariah and Elizabeth were living, to serve her cousin who was near the time of bringing John, the precursor of Jesus, to light. Mary's is a "**going in haste**" with zeal, with concern, and without "losing time." This interior availability is the sign of a poor heart. Only a **poor heart**, in fact, can be open to others' needs and to the cry of the poor because it is capable of audacity and of intuition in the face of the true needs of the poor and in finding appropriate and adequate responses to them. A poor heart is more sensitive to people's poverties: it knows how to recognize and discover them, accept them, and overcome them.

Poverty of the heart, like liberation from every form of individualism, is the **pre-requisite for the mission**: sacrificing everything renders us ready to "cooperate with Christ for the salvation of the young." (Articles 22 and 26)

Jesus calls the Twelve and **sends them on mission** with words which shake with urgency and energy, with radical commitment and with poverty. They do not distinguish themselves for their virtue or for their particular abilities or specific qualities. If something is missing which is necessary for their carrying out and completing their task, it will be given them at an opportune moment: what is asked of them is that they do not rely on their own means for support or propagation; therefore, they are to take no sack, no bread, no money, no change of clothes... Nor should they seek out a more comfortable habitation (when you enter a house, remain there until you leave from that place). Their tasks were: to proclaim the Gospel and to call to conversion, not to seek success. If they do not succeed, this ought not matter to them; instead, they must just move on and preach elsewhere.

The word "**mission**" was not said to Mary for it was unnecessary. No one more than she felt sent - in the absolute uniqueness of her existence and in her total service to the cause of the Word. That cause **was totally hers** and she took it upon herself to transmit it to whoever was in

need of it. Her intimate union with Christ, united to her state as mother, broadened the area of her missionary service. Having been grasped by Christ and conquered by His Love, She became His most faithful reflection.

What distinguishes the *disciple-missionary* is not his human worth, his spiritual creativity, or his religious influence, but the Call received from Jesus Christ, the mission which he received, and the stamp which he has impressed upon it. The apostle does not speak in his own name, but in the Name of Christ. He does not allow himself to be guided by his own knowledge or his own experience, but by the word of God and by the mission received.

Jesus' call is centered *on poverty and on courage*. The mission, before all else demands total self-giving; one's hands must be empty.

*Gospel poverty* permits us to follow Jesus "with a heart that is freer" and "available without reserve" for the mission, "becoming a sign of the gratuitousness of God's love." (Art. 18) Poverty frees our hearts because it opens us to the communion of goods (see Art. 25), to detachment from "anything which has temporal value, monetarily-speaking." (Art. 19) It frees us from "individualism and from the desire to possess." (Art. 21) In the mission, it helps us overcome all forms of welfare which do not foster processes for the advancement, the development, of persons.

When poverty is authentic, it disposes us with greater efficacy to help "the young to free themselves from slavery to things and to be formed in the ability to share and to give." (Art. 23)

It gives us the strength to be coherent and to give visibility to the Gospel's lifestyle, a style which is modest and which "removes from us the logic of superiority and of dominion or control."

The zeal with which Mary sets out shows us that going forth does not depend upon the abilities of persons but, rather, on what has happened to them. Mary wants to share and wants to bring to others the beautiful things which have happened to her

It does not suffice for us to be aware of our poverty, which is both essential and existential, we also need to be like Mary in this poverty, accepting in ourselves the sentiments of our older Brother, Jesus. We must open wide our area of missionary service so as to be true sons and daughters and brothers and sisters among ourselves.

Let us ask ourselves:

- What attitudes seem coherent with Mary's experience, which can arise from a pure heart where our God is our Lord and our only true wealth?

- What personal choices of moderation and sobriety, motivated by wanting to give a response of love to God and to others, can I live in my own little world?
- The mission requires a certain urgency to accomplish all that is necessary. And for me, what causes me to “make haste”?