

Rev. Paul A. Hottinger

**Laborers for the Harvest** First Week of Advent Saturday, December 6, 2014 8:15 AM  
Is 30:19-21, 23-26; **Mt 9:35—10:1, 6-8** (St. Nicholas, bishop) (It's about workers who will "cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, drive out demons.")

Today we have another example of Matthew showing Jesus fulfilling the prophecies of Isaiah. **Isaiah promises that God will come to heal his people, support his people, feed his people, and here Jesus is doing exactly that.**

**But it's very clear that it's too much for him. "The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few." He cannot do it all by himself. "So ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest."** Now this has often been used in our Catholic tradition to talk about vocations to the priesthood or the religious life. It's not about that. That's trying to institutionalize something. **This is not about the priesthood or the clergy or the religious orders, not at all.**

**It's about workers who will "cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, drive out demons."** This is the work he is talking about. Let's not divert our attention to something else. That is what has happened, unfortunately, in the history of our Church; **our attention is diverted to merely spiritual matters, as if the Church is only about spiritual matters.** Cleansing leprosy is not a spiritual thing. If you had leprosy, you would know that. Expelling demons is not actually even a spiritual thing, although it involves the power of the Holy Spirit. But it involves also the physical bodies being attacked, including the brain and the mind being attacked by evil. Curing the sick does not mean simply giving people graces. It means curing the sick.

And that's the role that Jesus played because that's where the needs of people were. And this we have to see: **Jesus came to care for the needs of the people, whatever they were.** And in every case he was up to it to a point. He was capable of it within the context of those

he could meet, but he couldn't run all over Judea and meet everyone who had a need. That was impossible. Any need that came to him he cared for. He cured all their illnesses that came to him. **But not everyone could come to him.** So he says, "Pray to the harvest master to send more workers." Even he had at this point only twelve he could rely on. That was not enough either. Later on there were over seventy. That wasn't enough either. **There are never enough laborers. The work is so great.**

But we have to understand what the work is. **It's not just sanctifying souls.** That's all part of it. **Sanctifying souls is really a preparation for the work of the harvest. Those who are going to be laborers, they have to be sanctified.** They have to be **filled with the power of the Holy Spirit, or they won't be effective.** But the work of the Church is not simply sanctifying people. **It's bringing about the total redemption of human life,** the total deliverance of human life from every form of evil, whether the evil is spiritual in nature, physical in nature, mental in nature, emotional in nature, **whatever disorder exists.** Jesus is talking about **healing it. That's our task that he has given us.**

So **"Ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest."**