The Ascension, Year 2 (Mk 16:15-20)

 **PREACH THE GOSPEL**

"Go out to the whole world; proclaim the Good News to all creation" (Mark 16:15).

Each of us is sent to preach the gospel in our own words. We tell the good news, with reference to our own experience, when we have committed our life to God.

There is "The Gospel According to Me", which is what I can say about my life of faith, my life with God, and what my life gives witness to, even without saying anything.

We are like Peter and John, in the first reading (Acts 4:13-21). To some extent, we have handed ourselves over to the will of God our Father, and we have discovered what a life of faith does to us. To that extent, "we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard."

Pope Paul VI, in *Evangelii nuntiandi*, gave us a rich insight into ways of spreading the gospel. He included among these ways: human love, the family, the education of children and adolescents, professional work, and suffering.

Suffering runs through all these areas of life. Suffer, we will, one way or another. How we suffer, together with the crucified Son of God, or without him, makes the difference between bad news and the Good News, our personal gospel.

Very likely, none of you can go out and tell everyone that the love you share with your spouse is Christlike in every way. But that admission doesn't disqualify you from spreading the gospel of Christian love. Sometimes, the good news that people give out about themselves is too good to be true!

Your good news is rather that God in Jesus Christ has given you what you needed to cope with a partner who is not faultless. And God has given him or her what was needed to cope with you. You confidently hope that God will continue to support you both, and enable you to be compassionate in trying situations.

You don't tell this good news so much as show it to be a fact. The faith is caught, not taught. The faith is contagious from one person to another, and from one family to another. Not that your family is expected to be impeccable, where no member ever puts a foot out of place. There is no such family.

But each of our families has strengths. We rejoice in our strengths as gifts of God, and we develop them for the good of ourselves and others.

We recognise also our weaknesses, bear one another's burdens, and rely on the presence of God to help us. We see our own family come through crushing experiences by the power of prayer and holding on to God's will. This is our good news, our gospel to tell others about. "We cannot but speak of what we have seen."

It's the same with those other ways of spreading the gospel that are open to us all. It’s not that we can give a faultless performance that must convince all who see it that God is here with us. No. Even after we have done all things well and strained all our resources, in educating the children, in handing responsibility over to adolescents, in doing our day’s work conscientiously, our efforts are still not entirely successful.

But through it all, the successes and the failures, a person who commits himself or herself to God in the way Jesus did gives out the good news.

The good news is this: God is our loving Father in good times and in bad. God is our strength when others fail us. God is merciful and compassionate.