

FISHERS OF MEN, PHYSICIANS OF SOULS, AND SERVANTS OF THE WOUNDED.

When Jesus called Simon Peter, He said, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men” (Matthew 4:19). Jesus did not specify the gender, age, social status, or economic condition of those Peter would reach. His mission was universal: to bring every human soul closer to God.

However, when the Pharisees questioned Him for associating with sinners, Jesus replied, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners” (Mark 2:17). Here, Christ reveals another dimension of every human mission. We are not called merely to gather those who already believe, but also to seek the lost, accompany the spiritually wounded, and restore hope to those who have wandered away from God.

A fisherman does not cast his net into an empty basket; he returns to the waters where fish remain uncaught. Likewise, we must never become so occupied with those already comfortable in our Christian communities that we forget those who are suffering, abandoned, or searching for God. Nevertheless, even those strong in faith need continued spiritual nourishment and growth. Our mission is not simply to fill our churches, but to bring Christ's healing presence into the wounded hearts of humanity.

Jesus further reminds us in Matthew 25:35–40 that when we feed the hungry, visit the sick, welcome strangers, clothe the naked, and care for those in prison, we serve Him Himself: “As you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.” Therefore, evangelization must extend beyond preaching. It must become visible through visiting the sick, supporting vulnerable children, caring for the elderly, assisting the poor, comforting the grieving, and restoring dignity to those whom society has forgotten.

Pope Benedict XVI, in *Deus Caritas Est*, teaches that charitable service belongs to the very nature of the Church's mission. Similarly, Pope Francis, in *Evangelii Gaudium*, challenges the Church to go out toward the peripheries of human existence, reaching those who suffer and those who feel excluded. These teachings remind us that the Church must not merely speak about wounded humanity; She must go out and help heal its wounds.

We are also called to become physicians of souls. Our words should encourage the discouraged, correct the sinner with compassion, and guide the lost toward conversion. As St. Augustine famously taught, “Love, and do what you will.” Genuine Christian love must shape our words, actions, and relationships. If we preach forgiveness but refuse to forgive, our message loses credibility. If we preach charity but ignore the hungry, our witness becomes empty. If we celebrate the Eucharist but remain indifferent to suffering, we fail to live the fullness of the love we celebrate. Our lives must make the Gospel believable before our lips attempt to make it understandable.

St. John Paul II consistently defended the dignity of every human person, reminding the Church through his social teaching that human worth must never be measured by wealth, productivity, social status, or physical ability. The poor are not burdens; children are not disposable; the elderly are not useless; and even prisoners remain human beings deserving of dignity and the possibility of rehabilitation. Consequently, our success as Christians cannot be measured only by crowded churches, impressive

ceremonies, or the number of people who admire our preaching. It must also be reflected in transformed lives, restored dignity, and compassionate service.

Let us therefore ask ourselves: Are we reaching the lost or merely gathering those already found? Are we healing wounds or simply pointing them out? Are we serving Christ only at the altar or also recognizing Him in the hungry, the sick, the abandoned, and the forgotten?

We are called to be fishers of men, physicians of souls, and servants of the wounded. For when we serve the least among us, we serve Christ Himself.

May we never become so religious that we forget to be merciful, so knowledgeable that we forget to be compassionate, or so comfortable in our faith that we abandon those whom Christ has called us to seek.

Submitted by Frt. Leodigerd Shirima