

Homily for 14th Sunday in Ordinary Time

1st Reading: Isaiah 66:10-14C

2nd Reading: Gal 6:14-18

Gospel: Luke 10: 1-12, 17-20 (see last page)

Imagine for a minute that you've just returned home from Mass, had a nice breakfast and you sit down to read the morning paper. You open to the "Help Wanted" section and see this ad:

Sales Positions Open: "Jesus of Nazareth seeks adventurous associates to proclaim the reign of God and spread 'the Good News' of salvation throughout the region. Share the challenge and excitement of being like lambs among wolves. You'll travel light, since money bags, sandals and a second tunic are not allowed. May risk being kicked out of some villages or even stoning. Applicants should be friendly and enthusiastic, since meals and nightly accommodations depend on the generosity of those who accept your message. Compensation: meager; Health Insurance, paid vacations and 401K plans not included. Awesome, After-Life Reward Plan includes eternal happiness and ecstasy in heaven with God, His angels and His saints. Apply 1-800-BAPTISM.

Basically, this is the assignment and reward that Jesus offers his disciples. Even so, he was able to find 72 men to take Him up on it!

Now, how many of you would sign up for such a career? Probably not many, right? Well, guess what—you already did!

When we were baptized as infants our body became a dwelling place of God and our soul was filled with grace and virtue. We became children of God, heirs to the Kingdom of Heaven and participants in Divine nature. At that moment we were

called to perform a unique mission, a mission that includes growing the Kingdom of God. Of course, all this happened before we were able to accept this marvelous call, this amazing promise of God. Rather, our parents and god parents —acting on our behalf—accepted this mission for us. As time went on and we grew in body and soul, we ratified this acceptance by receiving the sacraments and by prayer.

Through our baptism we take on a life that mirrors the life of Christ. We are called to spread the good news of salvation not just in words, but especially through our actions. This Christian life begins with the mandate of Jesus, ***“You shall love the Lord your God with your whole heart, with your whole mind and your whole being.”*** Then He tells us to, ***“Love one another as I have loved you.”***

Loving God isn't simply a passive feeling; it's an unconditional commitment. It requires us to worship and praise God always, just as Jesus did. As Catholics, we understand that this means attending Mass every Sunday and on Holy Days of obligation. It means that we are called to give witness to our Catholic faith and the teachings of Jesus in everything we do and say. Genuine love of God leads us to pray, to receive the sacraments often, **especially the sacraments of Reconciliation and Holy Communion.** It demands that we avoid temptation and reject sin.

Loving one another isn't easy, either. Especially since we are called to love others just as Jesus loves us. It means that we must forgive those who have offended us, and yes, even to make sacrifices for the sake of others. Jesus sent His disciples out in pairs because He wanted them to support and encourage one another. Well, we're not alone on our journey, either. We need each other for support, encouragement, a listening ear and even a bit of advice from time to time. We share each other's joys, just as we comfort each other in times of sorrow and pain.

But there's more.

Going to other towns and cities preaching the gospel of Jesus, as these 72 disciples did, probably isn't what God has in mind for most of us. Jesus didn't sugar-coat the assignment He gave to His disciples. He warned them that they might face opposition, ridicule and maybe even death. My friends, the mission Jesus gives us is risky as well.

As followers of Christ we must boldly defend both Natural and Divine law. Secular Laws that allow the killing of babies, even up to the moment of birth, must be condemned and overturned. The dignity and sanctity of traditional marriage must be defended and applauded. Couples living together outside of marriage is a serious sin and should never be condoned. So called "same sex marriage" is a scandal against Natural Law and the family; it cannot be excused. **Indeed, it seems that the very idea of God is being pushed out of our social fabric.** These are some of the challenges that our modern society presents us with; these are challenges we are called to confront.

Tragically, many have abandoned their Baptismal promises and have become slaves to the world and its pleasures. Praising God and the promise of the glory of heaven is no longer a priority for them. Look around you at the neighboring pews. I'm sure you see a vacant seat where someone you know used to sit but haven't been seen in Church for a long time. It might even be a friend or relative. Next time you see one of these people, invite them back to Church; tell them how much they're missed; remind them that we need them and they need the Church.

When Jesus sent His disciples out to preach the reign of God, He said, *"The harvest is abundant, but the laborers are few; so, ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest."* Let us never forget that through our baptism we, too, are laborers for the harvest!

My friends, please pray for each other. Pray for those Catholics who no longer practice their faith. Pray for the Church, for our priests and bishop. Pray for those who, even today, are being persecuted for their faith. Pray that God will give us the laborers that we need for His abundant harvest.

Amen.

Gospel LK 10:1-12, 17-20

At that time the Lord appointed seventy-two others whom he sent ahead of him in pairs to every town and place he intended to visit. He said to them, "The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few; so ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest. Go on your way; behold, I am sending you like lambs among wolves. Carry no money bag, no sack, no sandals; and greet no one along the way. Into whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace to this household.' If a peaceful person lives there, your peace will rest on him; but if not, it will return to you. Stay in the same house and eat and drink what is offered to you, for the laborer deserves his payment. Do not move about from one house to another. Whatever town you enter and they welcome you, eat what is set before you, cure the sick in it and say to them, 'The kingdom of God is at hand for you.' Whatever town you enter and they do not receive you, go out into the streets and say, 'The dust of your town that clings to our feet, even that we shake off against you.' Yet know this: the kingdom of God is at hand. I tell you, it will be more tolerable for Sodom on that day than for that town."

The seventy-two returned rejoicing, and said, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us because of your name." Jesus said, "I have observed Satan fall like lightning from the sky. Behold, I have given you the power to 'tread upon serpents' and scorpions and upon the full force of the enemy and nothing will harm you. Nevertheless, do not rejoice because the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice because your names are written in heaven."