

July 7, 2019

Is 66:10-14c; Gal 6:14-18; Lk 10:1-12, 17-20

Jesus invites us to be his disciples, he call us all to discover the vocation we have within the church; he calls us to learn the Christian way of life by living it. Christianity isn't a classroom subject. It is less like getting a degree in Philosophy, and more like training to take on a trade, or to become a counselor, a priest, a nurse, or a doctor. Those professions have a certain amount of classroom study that you have to do, but the real test - and the most intense form of learning - is by doing. The priest in training does pastoral assignments (like our Seminarian Mike is doing), the doctor or nurse or counselor do internships and clinical placements, and the tradesman becomes an apprentice to learn the trade in a hands-on way from a Master. Christianity is like this - we apprentice ourselves to our Master, Jesus Christ, and it is in living the life he led - under his guidance - that's when we really learn.

There comes a time in the life of any apprentice that they have to be given a task to do on their own. It is a time to apply what they have been taught - it is a time for the deeper learning you can only get by doing. When I was training to be a psychotherapist, I was given clients to work with during my internship. I really started to understand what I'd learned in school as I reviewed with my supervisor what happened after each session. Today we hear of Jesus sending out seventy two disciples out in pairs. After they go out for a time, they return to Jesus and review what happened. As disciples (which means students or apprentices) they were still learning - but the only way to move to the next level was to follow Jesus' lead, and to continue learning from the Master by doing as he did. These disciples are sent out into the world to the places that Jesus intended to visit, to prepare the people for his coming. They were bringing a message of hope that *we* are also called to transmit to the world. It is the message of a God who desires to care for us, to heal the problems we have created in our lives and on the Earth, and to bring us to a union with him in peace after death.

We hear this message in the first reading: *Rejoice with Jerusalem and be glad because of her ... Lo, I will spread prosperity over Jerusalem like a river ... as a mother comforts her child so will I comfort you.* Jesus will go into the villages visited by the disciples and announce that he is the promised Messiah. He comes to bring healing, peace, hope, and the truth about the great plan God has to save us. When we act in discipleship we reach out to spread the message of the

Gospel, we bring the comforting and healing touch of Jesus to others, and we pay attention to the instructions and guidance provided by the Master teacher. But how do we do this? Let's look at some of the instructions Jesus gives to the disciples before they head out.

First, he gives two beginning instructions: *Ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest*. The first act in anything we undertake should be to pray, to ask God to guide us as we live out what God teaches, and for God to call others to be part of the effort. Pope Francis put it this way: "The laborers for the harvest are not chosen through advertising campaigns or appeals of service and generosity, but they are "chosen" and "sent" by God. It is the Lord who chooses, it is Lord who sends, it is the Lord who gives the mission." Search out the specific call God has made to you, and remember that God will call others to be there with you. The second beginning instruction: *Carry no money bag, no sack, no sandals*. In other words, trust in God to provide. Pope Francis again: "The spread of the Gospel is not guaranteed either by the number of persons, or by the prestige of the institution, or by resources. What counts is to be permeated by the love of Christ, [and] to let oneself be led by the Holy Spirit."

Jesus tells us how to interact with those who we invite to discipleship: *into whatever house you enter first say "peace to this household"* - engage others in a spirit of love and peace, not of arguing and fighting. *Eat and drink whatever is offered to you* - don't be picky and demanding. *Do not move about from one house to another* - don't just float around to find where it is easiest. We communicate the Gospel of Jesus by our words and (more importantly) by our example of Christian living. We pave a road for the Lord by having the courage to make statements that remind others of Jesus and his teachings. We are true disciples by praying and responding to what the Lord tells us in prayer, and by inviting others to join us in the practice of the faith. This call is not just for missionaries or the ordained, it is for all of us - each in his/her own way as God leads. If you really want to understand what Jesus teaches, you have to live it.

Our goal in this can't be our own personal satisfaction or glory, but to unite others to Jesus. Jesus tells the disciples to not rejoice because the demons are subject to them, and Paul says in the second reading: *May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ*. As we approach Jesus in the Eucharist today let us ask him to more clearly show us the path of discipleship and vocation that he is pointing out to us. A path that will lead us to greater satisfaction in this life, a path that will draw others to the enriching life of Christ, a path that leads us home to the lap of the loving God who made us and who cares for us each day.