



# Thoughts on the Journey

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Going away indefinitely, I wanted to be sure I had everything I needed. So, I did a quick once-over before heading south. My red Datsun B-210 was loaded and ready for the mission ahead. I was excited about my new job with Glenmary Missions as the Religious Education Director for three small mission parishes in rural Georgia. My home base was St. Christopher church in Claxton and my boss was Fr. Bill Smith, a George Burns look-alike complete with a cigar. Fr. Smith was a joy to work with and gave me the freedom to blaze new trails. After several months, I proposed the idea of beginning an ecumenical youth group with other churches in the area. Fr. Bill gave his approval with the strong caution that I may not be met with the same enthusiasm by area pastors. I don't think I heard him because my excitement was bubbling over into my ears and all I wanted to do was get started.

My first appointment was with a Southern Baptist pastor in Glennville. He greeted me with a handshake and invited me to sit in his office. As he made small talk, he walked over to the door and locked it. At that moment, a loud warning went off in my head and suddenly my enthusiasm was reduced to fear. I did not understand his reason for locking the door, but soon it would become clear. He asked me to explain the reason for my visit and listened respectfully as my ardor began to return. After presenting my proposal to him, he picked up his Bible where it comfortably hung on his left hand. The minister began to quote chapter and verse about the horrors of Catholicism in fire and brimstone style. I thought to myself, "Well this isn't going well." After thirty minutes of flipping the pages forward and back, his preaching stopped. I was speechless and not at all prepared for the tongue lashing I received nor the ignorance with which it was delivered. I thanked him for his time, told him I would be in

touch (that was a lie), and left promptly.

In this week's gospel from Mark, Jesus prepares His apostles to go out two by two to preach repentance. Our Lord gave them authority over unclean spirits and then gave specific instructions to take nothing with them but a walking stick. He told them what to wear and what to do when they entered a town, warning them to stay at only one house. This was to set them apart from other preachers who, at the time, went from house to house taking advantage of the people where they stayed. Jesus then told them,

**“...Whatever place does not welcome you or listen to you, leave there and shake the dust off your feet in testimony against them.”**

Jesus gives us a very straight forward list of qualifications He expects from us as people called to preach His message. The call to be a disciple is a call to make disciples. However, it first requires us to walk by faith, depending on God's provisions and power rather than our own. We are accountable only for our faithfulness to share the gospel while trusting in God to take care of the results.

Looking back on that encounter, I was neither prepared for the mission nor ready to let go of my ego to avoid the fear and failure I encountered. I was driven more by my own will rather than God's will. At no point did I consult with Christ in prayer before starting out. I took a load full of expectation with me rather than remaining empty and open to the work of the Holy Spirit. I could not refute the distortion of the gospel that the minister was spouting at me because I lacked knowledge of scripture. I have learned along the journey that it is God who empowers, sustains, and feeds us to be effective disciples and it is trusting in His Word that makes us fearless.