

Jesus begins to give the Twelve Apostles greater responsibility with a share in his mission of healing and teaching.¹ Jesus instructs them, “Whatever house you enter, stay there and leave from there” (Lk 9:4). Jesus does not want them to seek out a wealthy benefactor who will make them very comfortable. Instead, he wants them to focus on the common man.

I am reminded of the late great Pope John Paul II. In addition to being the Pope for the worldwide Roman Catholic Church he was also the Bishop of Rome. As the bishop, he tried to visit the hundreds of parishes in the Diocese of Rome one at a time. When he went into each parish, he usually tried to stay with a humble family. That way he could learn first-hand about their spiritual needs. He could share their joys and their sorrows, their struggles and their crosses.

The Twelve Apostles are to travel lightly. No cell phone, no backpack, no food, no spending money. They must rely on God and the goodwill of the people to provide for them. Imagine that in one or two places, no one offers them help. They might need to sleep in the cold, they might go hungry and without food. They will experience the difficult life of the poor. And with a spirit of prayer, it will help them to have greater compassion for them.

When I was studying to be a priest, we were sent out from the seminary two by two. We did not stay overnight, but often times we entered the humble homes of people who had very little. They had great struggles in life dealing with mental health issues. Many had been homeless, but the community in Portland made a great effort to try to help the homeless get off the streets and have a simple apartment they could call home.

One day, my classmate and I learned that a man we visited each week had chosen to give up his apartment and return to a simpler way of life with no apartment. He returned to life without a roof over his head. As the weather grew colder, we brought a coat for the man and offered it to him. He turned us down but explained his reasoning. Sometimes he slept in a shelter, and he did not want to be a rich man in the homeless shelter by having a warm coat.

In the Ten Commandments, we are told not to covet our neighbor’s goods. This man had seen people fight over a warm jacket and he preferred to go without rather than insight another person into envying what he had. I had to admire this man for his simplicity of life. Homeless, he had to rely on the goodwill of others for food each day. And without any material goods, he thought and pondered on the injustices of life. His example was very Christ like. Jesus once said, “Foxes have dens and birds of the sky have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to rest his head” (Lk 9:58). This man had no place to rest his head, but he did have a wisdom that one learns in the most difficult of circumstances.

The mission of Jesus also involves the cross. To free us from sins, Jesus suffered and died for our salvation. Those who wish to follow Jesus must likewise take up their cross and follow him.

¹ Gadenz, Pablo T.. The Gospel of Luke. Pg. 171.