In the Gospel narrative of Mark 6:7-13 we are given a profile of those who believed in Him. From among His followers, Jesus chooses the Twelve, His band of intimate friends. The Twelve together with the other disciples are Jesus’ true family and community.

This is an amazing story. Jesus just takes twelve ordinary people, and he says, “Okay, go to it now.” Why? Because the future is yours, not mine, you see. “I will be with you all days, even to the end of time.” That is true. “I will comfort you. I will never leave you.” And yet you must do it alone, or you will feel that you are doing it alone.

Because the only way the word of God will reach the ends of the earth is through, not Jesus, but through men and women who take their lives seriously and who live their lives seriously. By their work and their prayer and their commitment, the word of God is spread, and spreads out through the whole world and from generation to generation.

So never ask: “When is God going to do this? When is God going to do that? When is the parish going to do this? When is the parish going to do that?” Because the answer is that each one of us is supposed to do it right now. One of the excuses we bring up is that we are not qualified! We forget that ‘qualification’ is within our reach. What we must learn to do is to love the other person as Jesus loves him/her, not as you love him, but as Jesus loves him/her.

Jesus instructs his disciples to take nothing for the journey especially of comforts and security like food, travelling bag and money. When he sends the Twelve to preach, He tells them to take only the minimum requirements for the journey: walking stick and a pair of sandals which can give protection against wild beasts and snakes and the rough roads of Palestine at that time. He urges His disciples to travel light for greater mobility and availability in their mission. Their focus is on proclaiming the Good News and must be free from encumbering baggage.

All of us are called by God to be missionaries, proclaimers, and witnesses to others of His Words. Vatican II document entitled Apostolican Actuositatem (on the Apostolate of the Laity) no. 3 said: “Incorporated into Christ’s Mystical Body through Baptism and strengthened by the Spirit through Confirmation, the laity are assigned to the apostolate by the Lord Himself.” So, whether you are an accountant, a lawyer, a clerk, a doctor, a musician, or an executive, a teacher or whatever, you are sent out “to preach, heal, teach and witness to the good news,” in short, to evangelize. The motto of our Parish is: From His heart to Others through Us.

Be blessed, Fr. Tom Kunnel C.O.

July 11, 2021
FIRST READING
The LORD took me from following the flock, and said to me, “Go, prophesy to my people Israel.” (Am 12:15)

PSALM
Lord, let us see your kindness, and grant us your salvation. (Ps 85)

SECOND READING
Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavens, as he chose us in him, before the foundation of the world, to be holy and without blemish before him. (Eph 1:3-4)

GOSPEL
Jesus summoned the Twelve and began to send them out two by two and gave them authority over unclean spirits. (Mk 6:7)


WORSHIP & MEDITATION

A MESSAGE OF JOY & HOPE

GOSPEL MEDITATION
Encourage Deeper Understanding of Scripture

Maybe the work is best left to the professionals. That’s how many people view the preaching of the Gospel. That’s the stuff priests, religious, deacons, lay ministers, and other professional Church people do. It has little to do with me. Well, that’s not really true. The fact of the matter is that preaching the Gospel has everything to do with you, with all of us who are baptized members of the Body of Christ. Nobody gets off the hook from that job. The question is, however, how do we do it? Well, there’s a safe way, which many choose, to preach the Gospel — and the risky way. The safe way pretty much keeps the Gospel in church and around like-minded people. I say my prayers, go to Mass, contribute to the food pantry, tithe, and attend Bible Study. That pretty much covers the bases, right? Wrong.

The risky way is the more challenging way and for many, the “road less traveled.” Imagine those first disciples going out and into people’s homes. They must have had some amazing conversations with folks about God’s kingdom, changing their hearts, forgiving sins, and looking at the world differently. They must have met people who were hurting, exiled from their communities, neglected, lost, or living self-insulated lives in a society that served the rich and neglected the poor. While there were many who welcomed what they had to say and the conversations they had, there were others who no doubt rejected them and literally tossed them out on their ears! The Gospel, while being a message of joy and hope, is not always received well by those who are very comfortable keeping things as they are.

The risky way involves example and conversation. We have to take the Gospel from church and carry it with us wherever we go. What kinds of conversations do we have with others? We interact with those closest to us, in our work, social circles, institutions, corporations, in politics, and beyond. Our conversations with others reveal a great deal about how we see things and what we consider important. If we are really interested in seeing God’s vision for the world succeed, then we will talk about it. It will become a part of our everyday conversation and find its way into our interactions with others. How will we preserve the dignity of human life and encourage others to have a relationship with God? We must be the example, live value centered, virtuous lives, stand against injustice, combating racism, and learn ways to resolve conflicts without violence.

If we are going to succeed going forward, we have to find a way to bring our prayer centered lives into the marketplace. Our conversations have to change. Not everyone wants to hear what the Gospel has to say. That’s a risk God asks us to take.
The first reading, Amos 7:12-15

This first reading shows us, in the rejection of an Old Testament prophet, what would happen to Jesus and the apostles. For a long time, the territory we call the Holy Land had been divided between a northern kingdom called Israel and a southern kingdom known as Judah. The city of Jerusalem was in Judah. In the northern kingdom, at Bethel, there was a very ancient shrine with several priests. These Bethel priests sponsored the rich people and acted as cronies of King Jeroboam. The Prophet Amos was sent by God to these priests with the demand that they speak against the current neglect and exploitation of the poor by the powerful. Amos had come from Tekoa in the southern kingdom of Judah to Bethel in the northern kingdom of Israel, to pronounce God’s judgment on Israel and its King, Jeroboam. As a prophet, Amos foretold the overthrow of the throne and shrine by the hand of God. Amaziah who was the high priest told Amos that the King was angry with him and was seeking to kill him. It would be better for Amos to look for his own safety. Amos tells Amaziah that, in the eyes of God, the Temple that Amaziah served was not legitimate as it had been established by the royal household. But the furious chief priest of Bethel, Amaziah, told Amos to get out and go south to Judah “to earn your bread!” Amos retorted that he was not a professional prophet; he was a shepherd and dresser of sycamores. He had become a prophet only because God had sent him to deliver a message to Israel and its King. We are invited to see the mission of the twelve apostles and our mission as Christians as parallels of the mission of Amos.

The second reading, Ephesians 1:3-10,

This reading, taken from the letter to the Ephesians, is a prayer praising God for what God has accomplished in Jesus. In other words, Paul offers us the exercise of counting our blessings in the form of a benediction and thanksgiving in which we point to God as the Source of our blessings, in and through Jesus’ life, death and Resurrection. Through Christ, God has given us a clear purpose in life—to praise and to serve God and one another—with the Holy Spirit as a Helper in carrying out the task. Paul advises the Ephesians to count their blessings instead of focusing excessively on their inadequacies and deficiencies. In this prayer, Paul also reveals a Divine secret to the Jewish Christians: It was not God’s plan to keep the Jews as His Chosen People exclusively, but for all mankind to be saved, so that Gentiles would eventually be included! That inclusion had begun formally when Jesus sent Paul to preach to the Gentiles. Hence, the Jewish and the Gentile Christians were to respect and help each other, as both were now adopted children of God, brothers and sisters of Jesus.

GOSPEL INSIGHTS

In Jesus’ time, the Jews of Palestine ordinarily wore five articles of clothing. The innermost garment was called the tunic; and the outer garment was used as a cloak by day and as a blanket by night. Next, there was a girdle, which was worn over the tunic and cloak. The skirts of the tunic could be hitched up under the girdle for work or any strenuous activity. A headdress was also worn in order to protect the neck, the cheekbones, and the eyes from the heat and glare of the sun. Finally, the Jews wore sandals made of leather, wood or matted grass. They also carried a wicker basket within which was an ordinary traveler’s bag made of kid’s skin. The Jewish priests and devotees, who were often very covetous, carried these bags supposedly to collect contributions. No wonder, people labeled them “pious robbers” with their booty growing from village to village.

Why did Jesus send the Apostles in pairs? Because according to Jewish law, two witnesses were needed to pronounce a truth. Going two-by-two brought with it the authority of official witnesses. By Jesus’ instructions, it is clear that that his disciples should take no supplies for the road but simply trust in God for their requirements. God, the Provider, would open the hearts of believers to take care of the needs of the disciples. Jesus’ instructions also suggest that the apostles should not be like the acquisitive priests of the day, who were interested only in gaining riches. Instead, as disciples of Jesus, they must be concerned with “giving” rather than “getting.” They should be walking examples of God’s love and providence. By making their mission trip this way, they would also have the maximum of freedom and the minimum of burdens in their preaching and healing ministry. Jesus wanted his apostles to be rich in all the things which really mattered, so that they might enrich those who came into contact with them. Statistics tell us that most people who come to join a Church do so because a friend or relative brought them. So the best advertisement for any Church is the number of the faithful – men, women, and children, whose daily lives show forth some of the radiance of the Gospel.
1. **LIVING WITNESS**

We, too, have a witnessing mission: Each Christian is called not only to be a disciple but also to be an apostle. As disciples, we are to follow and imitate Jesus. As apostles, we are to evangelize the world. We are called to share with others not just words, or ideas, or doctrines but an experience — our experience of God and His Son, Jesus. Like the apostles, like St. Francis of Assisi, like St. Teresa of Calcutta (Mother Teresa), we are all chosen and sent to proclaim the Gospel through our living. It is through our transparent Christian lives that we must show, through our own actions, the love, mercy and concern of Jesus for the people around us. Since we are baptized, Jesus is calling us in our working and living environment to evangelize, to invite people to know, love, serve, and follow Jesus for the rest of our lives. An important part of evangelism is the simple act of inviting a friend or family member to join us in worship.

2. **RESCUE FROM EVIL**

Although many people don’t believe in real demonic possession in our age, there are many demons which can control the lives of people around us, making them helpless slaves. For example, there are the demons of nicotine, alcohol, gambling, pornography, promiscuous sex, materialism, consumerism, or of any other activity which somehow can take control of people’s lives and become an addiction over which they have no control. All of these, or any one of them, can turn people into slaves. We need Divine help to cooperate with Jesus today to become instruments in liberating ourselves and others from these things, helping them and ourselves to recover our freedom. We are meant to help people to cure their sicknesses — bodily, psychological, and emotional. As a family member, a friend, a colleague, an evangelizer, when we work with Jesus, we can truly exercise a healing influence.

3. **OUR GOD GIVEN DIGNITY**

Realization of our dignity as children of God should change our outlook on life. We are to be children filled with love, rather than selfishness and disobedience. We are to respect our brothers and sisters in Christ. As God’s children, we should live lives of absolute trust in the goodness of our Heavenly Father, Who knows what is best for us. The realization that we are the children of God should bring us great comfort, peace and joy— even in our worst moments.

**Any Questions?**

1. **Is there any common theme in all three readings?**
2. **What are the times when you felt you were similar to the disciples?**
3. **What could be done today to imitate the call to evangelization?**

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