

Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Is. 66.10-14; Gal. 6.14-18, Luke 10.1-12, 17-20

In today's first reading from the Book of Isaiah the Lord demands the people rejoice as they enter Jerusalem. What we are missing is that the people are returning to Jerusalem and the temple which is in ruins. Instead of focusing on the negative God, through the prophet Isaiah wants us to see the positive, to see the new birth of the nation. Not only will the physical city be transformed, but the people themselves will be a new creation, hence the references of mother, a new child especially when the people come to behold the Lord's power, their hearts will rejoice and their bodies will flourish like the growing grass.

This leads us into today's Gospel reading where Jesus is going to send the "72" ahead of Him. Remember last week's Gospel where Jesus invited people to join Him, and their response if you will was sure but not right now. This week Jesus tells the Disciples that the harvest is plenty and there is need of more laborers. The number of Disciples Jesus sends are "72", this number is important for several reasons. In Luke 9 Jesus sends the 12 Apostles out. The 12 recalls the 12 tribes of Israel. The 72 correlates to the number of elders appointed by Moses and the 72 anticipates the mission to the Gentile nations (Gen 10, Ex. 1.5, Deut. 32.80). Jesus has come as God's salvation for both Israel and the Gentiles.

The harvest signifies the Disciples mission. The very next line Jesus says "I am sending you like lambs among wolves" (Lk. 10.3). St. Luke does not indicate that any of the Disciples left, but rather St. Luke tells us in verse 17 that they returned rejoicing. To be sent out like a lamb does not sound like an encouragement. But it is through faith, trust and surrendering to the Lord that they embrace their mission.

Jesus sends the 72 out before Him to "prepare the way." They are given the directions to "cure the sick and say the kingdom of God is at hand for you" (v. 9). Jesus needs followers who will devote their lives to spreading the message of joy, healing, and salvation. Each of us are called to use our gifts and talents for the Church (see 1 Jn 4.10). What is your talent, are you using it to help the Church proclaim the kingdom of God? To evangelize to all nations is the mission of the Church, hence our mission. Jesus sends out the seventy-two in groups of two. Jesus sends them out two by two because it not only provides companionship for the

journey, it provides for the ability to hold up each other when the going gets tough, but it also provides a double dose of faith and wisdom to witness to others. According to Mosaic law, two witnesses were required for a testimony to be credible.

God calls some to the service of the Church through the Sacrament of Holy Orders or religious life. One of our missions is to obtain vocations for the Kingdom of God. We may do this through our lives, as examples to our children, through prayer for vocations, to encourage our children to explore the possibilities of a vocation. We must encourage each other to listen to the Lord, to ask what vocation God is calling you to.

Jesus gives us the framework for missionary work and evangelism right here in His instructions to these seventy-two newly commissioned evangelists. He first tells them to bring the gift of peace to those they visit. He then tells them to heal the sick. And finally, he tells them to preach the Good News that the Kingdom of God is near them. They were to teach, preach and heal, just like Jesus did when He entered a village. They prepared the way for Jesus Christ.

The mission of the seventy-two provides a model for the Church's ongoing mission to advance the kingdom of God through our word and deed. Amid the dangers posed by the forces of evil, Jesus continues to send out His disciples, empowering them for the task and promising them a heavenly reward. This applies to us as well.

The result of their evangelizing the Disciples return "rejoicing and said even the demons are subject to us because of your name." to which Jesus replied, "I have observed Satan fall like lightening from the sky." What Jesus is telling us the best way to defeat evil is to proclaim the Kingdom of God, to recognize God and all His works. To realize that the light of God, His Son Jesus Christ is upon us with the guidance and strength of the Holy Spirit our faith strengthened by prayer and fasting will increase our hope and love.

Doing God's work is never easy as we read in the Bible and see in our world today. As we grow in our faith, as we accept and proclaim the teachings of Jesus Christ we, as the 72 did must trust, we must surrender to God the Father and let the Holy Spirit lead us to use our talents and Gifts to build God's Kingdom here on earth. Let us work to grow our Church, the Church in which Jesus Christ established. Let us use our talents and gifts for Jesus Christ and His Church.