



Things to Ponder

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Homily – 15th Week in Ordinary Time – Mark 6:7-13

Introduction: A Manual Book for Discipleship

This weekend's Gospel from Mark describes how Jesus sent the disciples to minister in his name and offers details about Jesus the strategist, the instructor. This is a short reading but packed with nuggets of information about early Christian missionary work. Though the particulars are geared to a First Century Church and social environment, we can still pull out major "instructions" for being faithful and effective disciples in our world today. It is important to note that Jesus sent out the Twelve – 12 men who were especially selected from among Jesus' disciples. In chapter 3, Mark notes that these twelve are also called "apostles." The word "apostle" means "one who is sent." The number 12 is also a symbolic number, representing the 12 tribes of Israel. By naming 12 apostles, Jesus shows his mission to be in continuity with the mission of God's people, Israel. Being a faithful Jew, Jesus was constantly making the key linkage between the Hebrew Tradition and Scriptures and the New Way of the in-breaking Kingdom of God. Jesus is the master strategist - pulling his Jewish tradition into the being-born Christian Community. *Do I see myself as "one who is sent?"*

Jesus' instructions to the 12 apostles are very specific. He advises them to go out in pairs, envisioning the spread of the Gospel as a group effort, not as a task that needs to be performed alone. By going with another, the apostles are given companionship and a sense of security, especially when traveling in unfamiliar areas. *Who in my life accompanies me on my journey of faith?*

In addition, the apostles are instructed not to take essential items like food, bags, money or extra clothing. Why? Wouldn't Jesus want the apostles to be prepared for the journey? From our vantage point today, it makes no sense! However, Jesus likely has two goals in mind. First, to distinguish the apostles from other traveling preachers of the time; and second, to encourage the apostles to reflect his simple lifestyle and to rely on hospitality of others. *How can I reflect Jesus' simplicity of lifestyle and detachment from worldly goods and possessions?*

Lastly, while instructing the apostles to preach—and live—a message of reconciliation, Jesus alerts them to expect some rejection. Not everyone will greet the early Christians with open arms! And he instructs them to move on when being rejected. "Leave there and shake the dust off your feet." In effect, Jesus encourages

the apostles to move on quickly with their work and not to get bogged down with criticism and discouraging rejection *When have I felt some rejection in sharing and living my faith?*

I would invite you to take time to read and ponder the words from the *Gospel of Mark 6:7-13*.

What word or words caught your attention?

What in this passage comforted you?

What in this passage challenged you?

Further Reflections and Questions:

The apostles were allowed to take only one thing with them—a staff—something to lean on, to support them as they journeyed. Who, or what, is my staff? *Where do I find supports in living out my life as a disciple today?*

Lord, you warned the twelve apostles against carrying anything they did not need. *What holds me back from “traveling lightly?” What bogs me down on my faith journey? Can I toss anything out?*

Jesus told the apostles to shake the dust off their feet. They were not to be held back by those who are unreceptive or unwelcoming. *I ask God to help me not to let negative “dust” cling to me and to slow me down.*

Following Jesus means becoming a bit of a wanderer, both internally and, perhaps, externally. We are never completely grounded and “stuck” but are always on the move. Our eyes on the future.

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