

14TH SUNDAY in ORDINARY TIME, Cycle C

Isaiah 66: 10-14; Psalm 66: 1-7, 16, 20; Galatians 6:14-18; Luke 10: 1-12, 17-20

Holy Spirit Catholic Church: July 7, 2019

Last Sunday we began our journey to Jerusalem with Jesus in Luke's Gospel. On this journey we enter into a special school of discipleship where he teaches us what it means to live in the Kingdom of God and how to share the good news of that kingdom with others.

This good news is meant to be shared with the entire world, thus the sending of 72 disciples to share it. That number—72---comes directly from the 10th Chapter of Genesis—when it was thought there were 72 nations in the whole world.

Every single one of the baptized is given this mission of proclaiming the Kingdom of God, of bringing this Good News into the whole world. But what exactly is this good news?

St. Paul summarizes it in only a few words--- the **cross of Jesus Christ**. The Kingdom of God has erupted in the world because the King of Kings generously poured out his life in absolute love for His Father on the cross. We are swept up into this love that makes us a new creation in baptism, a love giving us a share in divine life and divine joy.

This news seems too good to be true—while we were still sinners Christ died for us. This news appears too good to be true---the Son of God by dying has destroyed the power of death—we have nothing to fear. This news seems too good to be true---Jesus Christ loves us, he gave his life to save us. But as we receive Christ Jesus, we realize it is true, for he is God's gift freely given to us.

Sharing the Good News is not meant to be difficult because it is first and foremost about our relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. Before we can be sent as one of the "72", we need to know Him and his love for us. For we cannot share what we have not received. We cannot give away what we have not accepted.

St. Paul calls himself the greatest of sinners because of his persecution of Christ, yet knows he is loved beyond all reason by the same Christ Jesus.

That's why Paul only boasts in the cross of Christ.

Some in the Christian community in Galatia reject this good news, listening to other preachers who tell them they have to do something more than respond in faith to Jesus. These "false preachers" have convinced some of Paul's flock that they have to be circumcised and follow all the prescriptions of the Jewish Law before they can become Christian.

Because of his experience of Christ's unmerited love for him, Paul knows this is not true. Rather, he proclaims that Jesus' love changes us, makes us into a "*new creation*."

Being Christian is not supposed to be complicated.

Simply receive the One who has been looking for you all your life long, the One who driven by love seeks out and finds the lost, bringing them home to the Father of all.

Experiencing His saving love, we naturally want to share it, to give it away to others.

How we share this Good News is important, too.

That we are loved comes first, but then proclaiming the Kingdom of God only happens in relationship to others.

Evangelization---sharing the Good News---happens as a result of relationship.

That's why preaching on street corners does not do much good---

the preacher does not know the people to whom he is talking, nor they him.

Notice how we are sent into the world by the Lord Jesus.

He does not tell us to take much at all --- other than our very self to others.

In other words, sharing the Good News is **a ministry of Presence**.

For 3 years Jesus traveled around Israel without a job, with nothing to his name, depending on others to feed him.

He brought the Kingdom to life in and through his very person, by his loving presence, by the relationships he nurtured and developed with others.

The same is true for we Christians, who carry Him in our very persons to others.

It is good to know the Bible, but we do not need to be able to quote chapter and verse.

It is good to know the basic beliefs of our faith, but we do not need to know the Catechism of the Church backwards and forwards.

We do not need to be trained in the latest, greatest program on evangelization.

We do not have to have all the answers, but rather be willing to be with people in their questioning and doubts, in their struggles and fears.

By being present to others in love, we bring them to the Lord of Love.

So, we proclaim the good news of the Kingdom of God by making a friend, growing in friendship with that person, and then bringing them to the Lord.

Notice how this is the pattern in the mission of the 72.

They taking nothing with them. They are to trust that there will be those who will receive and welcome them, who will want to grow in relationship with them. They do the very human thing of sharing meals with those who welcome them. They sit down at table and break bread with others, getting to know them.

Only after doing this, do they cure the sick and announce the Kingdom of God. Making a friend comes first, being a friend follows, and then the Kingdom of God can not only be proclaimed but received.

The definition of a Christian is someone who has come to know a Christian.

It's all rooted in the relationship.

The Kingdom of God is at hand--- close enough to touch in us— as we extend our hands in compassionate love to others.

There is another relationship that is essential to fulfill our mission to proclaim the Kingdom.

That is the relationship with other vital Christians, with those who are on the same journey as us and given the same mission of bringing the Good News of God's love to the world.

We do not and cannot do this alone.

There is a reason Jesus sends us out in "*pairs*".

We are strengthened and encouraged by our relationships with other vital Christians.

Finding nourishment from a community of Faith sustains us in our mission.

So we come back together to the table of the Lord to experience once again the saving gift of His Presence as he feeds us with His body and blood.

We go out, not alone, but with the support of one another, to share the love and life we have received.

Fr. Joseph A. Jacobi