

## HOMILY for 14<sup>th</sup> SUNDAY in ORDINARY TIME – Year C

This Sunday's Readings talk about being sent out on into the mission field. As I reflect on that message, I'm reminded of this cute story that I'd like to share with you.

A pioneer missionary in the jungles of Africa comes upon a lost civilization. He soon realizes that everywhere he goes he hears the beat of drums in the distance.

After two years of hard work, he finally deciphers the tribe's language and approaches the chief with a question.

"Honored sir, everywhere I go here I hear drums beating. Why do you play the drums all the time?"

The chief responds gravely, "If the drums stop, terrible disaster will come."

Puzzled, the missionary asks, "What disaster? A flood, earthquake, disease?"

The chief shakes his head sadly & says, "Worse! If drums stop, bagpipes begin!"

Believe it or not, that is what missionaries might encounter on mission land. In case you have no idea on how life might be like on mission land, let me share with you this warning of Jesus about it in this Sunday's Gospel. He said, "The harvest is rich but the workers are few... Be on your way, & remember: I am sending you as lambs in the midst of wolves. Do not carry a walking staff or traveling bag; wear no sandals & greet no one along the way. On entering any house, first say, 'Peace to this house.'" As you can see, the mission land is like a jungle full of dangers. His disciples would feel like lambs in the midst of wolves on the mission land. They would encounter hostility & lots of harm. They would not be welcomed with open arms & enthusiasm. Their audience would not want to listen to their messages & turn their lives over to Jesus easily. The people would want to continue their own traditions & follow their original ways of life. They would not want to make any significant changes in their lives. So, how would the missionaries begin their work in that hostile environment?

I don't know if you have ever had a chance to meet with a missionary or talk with someone about mission work in a foreign land or not. If you haven't, I encourage you to seek an opportunity to talk with a missionary about his/her work or read a story of a missionary. You'll be amazed at the work & commitment that a missionary would undertake in the name of Jesus. Sometime ago, I had a chance to talk with a friend who went over to Africa, Malawi to be specific, as a missionary & shared the Good News of Christ with the local folks for over a year. After spending some time with me in the seminary, John decided to go over to Malawi & do his mission work over there. His family & friends were all surprised at his decision, but tried to support him & his trip. John did all the required paperwork & health shots & finally ended up in Malawi.

John helped the local people learn English & grow their daily foods. He also gave them a hand with irrigation & some other projects in the village. He told me that the people over there did not have much, but their Christian faith was very strong. They always had joy & peace in their hearts in spite of the harsh living condition around them. Their church worship is a whole-day experience. They dressed in colorful clothes & sang their hearts out at Church Sunday Service. It seemed like they had a Heavenly experience at church & were able to block out all of their daily challenges. I asked John why he exchanged his comfortable life here in the USA for a missionary experience in Malawi. He simply said, "I wanted to know how it would be like to serve as a missionary in the foreign land." I responded, "I commend you for doing that. I hope

you got the experience that you've always wanted." After serving the people of God in Malawi for over a year, John completed his contract & returned here to the USA. He sure learned a lot from that missionary experience & always cherished it.

The reason I shared with you that missionary story is to remind us of our Christian duty as a missionary. If last Sunday Jesus called us to follow Him, this Sunday He wants us to take the next step as His disciples & be His missionary to the world. It's wonderful that we have chosen to follow Jesus. But, we can't stop there. We got to do the next thing; that is to carry out the mission work on behalf of Jesus. He asks us to share His Good News with the world & draw people closer to Him. He calls us to wash the feet of the misfortunate & feed the hungry. In case we still wonder how that mission work might look like in reality, this Sunday's First Reading has this following message for us, "...For thus says the Lord: I will spread prosperity over her [Jerusalem] like a river, & the wealth of the nations like an overflowing torrent. As nurslings, you shall be carried in her arms, & fondled in her lap. As a mother comforts her son, so will I comfort you. In Jerusalem, you shall find comfort." So, apparently the Lord would help Jerusalem & the people of God rebuild their homeland after years of exile & slavery. The Lord would bring comfort & peace to a broken nation. But, He needed missionaries & prophets to announce that Good News. He asked the people of good will to share that hopeful message with the people of God in exile.

It is sad for me to see that many Christians might have followed Jesus, but have not moved a finger to do any mission work for him. Or, if they have done any Christian witnessing to the world, it is all about politics & bickering with others over social issues. Who would want to join the Church that keeps arguing & fighting with one another? Who would wish to follow a group that cannot lift up one's spirit with hopeful news amidst a world of violence & hatred? If we have not done any mission work for Jesus yet, perhaps this Sunday is the time for us to get up & do so. If we cannot travel to foreign land & be a missionary there, maybe we can do some of that work right here by serving the poor & the misfortunate around us. Let's stop all the bickering & begin to be the harbinger of Good News to our broken world.

My dear brothers & sisters, it is the first step for us to answer Jesus' call & follow Him. But, our Lord does not need His disciples only in name. He desperately wants us to carry out our mission work & bring His Good News to our broken world. We cannot stand by idling when the mission work is abundant & needs to get done. We got to witness His love to the world if we want to remain His disciples.