

HOMILY for 14th SUNDAY in ORDINARY TIME – Year C

Reflecting on how Jesus sent out his early disciples to preach His Good News, I'm reminded of this cute story that I'd like to share with you.

A Jewish rabbi & a Catholic priest met at the town's annual Festival. They had been friends for a long time & launched into their usual banter.

"This baked ham is so delicious!" the priest teased. "You really ought to try it. I know it's against your religion, but I can't understand why such a wonderful food should be forbidden. You don't know what you're missing! Tell me, my friend, when are you going to give in & try it?"

The rabbi looked at the priest & responded, "At your wedding, of course!"

Anyway, in this Sunday's Gospel, we learn about how Jesus sent out His disciples as following, "...The Lord appointed a further seventy-two & sent them in pairs before Him to every town & place He intended to visit." So, Jesus evidently wanted the early disciples to do some preparation ahead of His coming. He told them, "...On entering any house, first say, 'Peace to this house.' If there is a peaceful person there, your peace will rest on him; if not, it will come back to you... Into whatever city you do, after they welcome you, eat what they set before you, & cure the sick there. Say to them, 'The Kingdom of God is at hand.' If the people of any town you enter do not welcome you, go into its streets & say, 'We shake the dust of this town from our feet as testimony against you. But, know that the Kingdom of God is near.'" So, Jesus sent His disciples out to houses & cities with the message, "Peace be with you. The Kingdom of God is at hand." Then, they are supposed to accept the host's hospitality & also bless everyone there with the gifts of peace & healing.

The first mission that Jesus would want all the Christians to do is to bring peace & healing to the world. For He knew that our current world is constantly in turmoil & broken into pieces. In case we do not believe it, all we have to do is look around the world & see that it is currently on fire. There are wars happening in the Holy Land, Ukraine, & Sudan, even in our own country. Most people have managed to get involved in politics & allowed all sorts of issues to stir them up & make them upset. In fact, many homes have been torn apart lately because their members have taken up various positions on many political issues. The Church itself has also been divided over all kinds of political & religious issues. We have allowed our Church & political leaders to teach us wrong values & replace our Christian virtues with secular & capitalist priorities. These leaders are supposed to make sacrifices for their communities & unite their Church & country to work for the common good. Instead, they have exploited political & religious issues to divide the communities & advance their ambition & personal benefits. That is why we have seen so much division & anger in our homes, Church, & country.

Nobody seems to care enough about peace in those places to call on the public to make sacrifices & compromises for the community & the common good. Only Jesus who had seen the wisdom for peace in homes, churches, synagogues, mosques, & countries to call on his disciples to sow the gift of peace & make personal sacrifices for it wherever they go. He even asked them to shake the dust off their feet & exit in peace wherever they might encounter opposition. Sadly, we have seen many people, even Christians these days who love to pick fights & get right on the face of their neighbors over all sorts of political & religious issues while ignoring the importance of keeping peace in the community. That is why Jesus has called on His disciples to

bring healing to all the communities that they would visit. In case we are not convinced about that mission of the Lord, today's First Reading tells us once again as following: "...For thus says the Lord: Lo, I will spread prosperity over her 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 your comfort." So, the Lord promised to send Jerusalem peace like a flowing river. In contrast, we have seen Church & political leaders call on their followers to fight like hell & create chaos wherever they go. Ironically those members have not realized how important the gift of peace is for their communities & demanded their leaders to work hard for it either.

The second & last mission that Jesus would want His disciples to do besides working hard for peace & healing of the communities is to get rid of all the evil spirits in our homes & communities. It takes a peaceful & virtuous person to make that happen. The seventy-two disciples were able to do that & in jubilation said, "Master, even the demons are subject to us in your name." So, the disciples were excited to drive out demons & evil spirits from homes & communities & replace those spirits with peace & virtues. They were able to help members of those communities to convert & turn their lives around because the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand. They were impressed that Satan & evil spirits would obey them. However, Jesus wanted all His disciples & followers to keep this message in mind, "...Do not rejoice so much in the fact that the devils are subject to you as that your names are inscribed in Heaven." So, remember that we must do everything in this life to have our names on the list of the chosen ones in Heaven like Jesus just reminded all His disciples & followers. For that is our most important goal/only mission in this life. We might succeed & achieve everything in this world; but if we fail to have our names on the list of the chosen ones in Heaven, it will come back to haunt us on the Last Day.

My dear brothers & sisters, what is your life mission? What are you supposed to do as Christians/disciples of Jesus? Are you here on earth to follow a certain human leader & a particular political movement? Or, would you rather think about your name on the list of the chosen ones in Heaven on the Last Day? I cannot answer it for you; but I know what I'm supposed to do with my own life & as a Christian. I want to follow only the man on the Cross & make personal sacrifices in this life for His mission of salvation. Why? Because I want my name to be on the list of the chosen ones in Heaven on the Last Day!