

Our Gospel reading today gives us an account of Jesus commissioning His twelve Apostles to carry on His mission. He gives them instructions to preach about the repentance of sin, and to heal the sick. He also empowers them with His authority “*over the unclean spirits.*” In this act of commissioning, the Apostles are personally encountering Jesus, receiving His grace and power, and being changed themselves.

Jesus is sending out twelve ordinary men, mostly fishermen with very little education and only a brief apprenticeship, to preach the message of God’s Word, which they themselves do not fully understand. Jesus instructs them that they are not to weigh themselves down with worldly goods of bread, money and baggage. Rather, they are to trust that those they serve will take care of their needs.

The one thing each Apostle is to take is a *walking stick*. Jesus knows they are going to need something to lean on. A walking stick will help them to keep their balance and as well, to protect them from robbers and wild animals.

Each of us also needs a *walking stick*, that is one other person to lean on, similar to having a walking stick. When we go forward to speak the Good News, we are going to need help and support. As well, our community, our Catholic Church and the Sacraments, are what become our walking stick that we can also lean on. That is why coming to Sunday Mass is important so that we can gain support from one another. The Mass forms part of our “*walking stick*” that will help us wherever we go.

Jesus sends the Apostles out “*two by two.*” In the Old Testament, two witnesses were required in legal proceedings. When Jesus directs the Apostles to go *two by two*, He is telling us that none of us need to be solely dependent on our individual strengths, but that we can rely on the strength of our faith community. We need partners in our life with whom we can talk and seek support from, and on whose prayers we can rely. We are encouraged to find others who will walk with us as we strive to speak the Good News of Jesus to others.

Finally, Jesus instructs His Apostles to shake from their feet the dust of a town that will not listen to their teachings and move on. The message for us and for our

Church as well is to not be paralyzed by people who reject the message of the Gospel. Nobody has a 100% success rate in his or her missionary work.

While we can be prepared for both acceptance and rejection, as were the Apostles, we need not be discouraged if our success seems limited. It is the work of Jesus that we are doing, and it is Jesus who will judge how successful we have been. Do not be paralyzed and preoccupied by failure.

We need to be sure that we do our best and then to move on if we are rejected. The point is to learn to shake off the dust when things do not work out and start all over again. There are other towns, other opportunities, other people, other places waiting to hear the Good News of the Gospel and receive Christ's truth.

For you and me, our walk in the way of our Lord does not differ from that of the Apostles in that we are going out as missionaries, searching out people who have not yet heard the Good News. We are going to our home, to our jobs, and to our community, living as members of families and communities sharing our faith by our actions and by our words. We are called to live God's law daily and give good example so those around us will see God in and through us.

Every baptized Catholic is called upon to accomplish this work of spreading the Good News of the Gospel. In order to receive and use all which God has given to us in our lives, we have to be open to see, to hear, and to accept our God-given Baptism call and the gifts and talents of the Holy Spirit provided to us, as the Apostles did when they were open to God. Ears that are closed to the message of God, eyes that are closed to our God-given gifts, and a life closed to doing the will of God will never fulfill the mission God has given to each of us.

It was not easy for the Apostles, but they were open to the commissioning Jesus had given them to proclaim the Good News. In and through Christ, we have been blessed indeed. It is time for us to recognize all that God has given us, and to go forth to live out our calling.

God has not only entrusted each of us with a particular mission in life, but He blesses each of us with a calling and gives us the talents with which to do our work. Each of us is called to holiness and mission which will saturate our family, our community, our school, our workplace and eventually the whole world with the presence

of God. We are Jesus' hands by the work we do, His tongue by the words we speak, and His feet by the places and people we will visit.

As Catholics, we are on a journey. We are not wanderers, but pilgrims and missionaries. We have a purpose and goal that God is sending us to fulfil. And we have the Truth, Jesus Christ Himself. If Jesus gives you a mission, He will also give you the resources and the grace to carry it out.

Jesus reinforces the fact that everything we need and have comes from God. Through Scripture and prayer, Jesus gives us the same lessons He gave His Apostles. In our own spiritual journey, we are called to rely upon God and upon others as we go about doing the work of God's Kingdom. In whatever circumstance we find ourselves, if we listen to God and depend on Him, we can accomplish what He asks of us.

Reflect on today's Gospel passage, not as something that happened over two thousand years ago, but as a personal encounter with Jesus *today*. And as you encounter Jesus in the Mass, in the Word and in the Sacraments, allow Him to transform you, and to reveal how He is choosing you and sending you out.