

We may recall in last week's Gospel that Jesus set His "*face to go to Jerusalem.*" Jesus has now crossed the border of Galilee to begin the Exodus to His passion, death and resurrection in Jerusalem. The entire earthly life of Jesus is focused on the redemptive mission given to Him by His Father. His mission is about setting the captives free, healing the sick, caring for the needs of the poor, liberating all who are in bondage, dispelling demons and revealing His Father's love for all people.

In today's Gospel Jesus expands His mission by choosing and commissioning 72 disciples to help Him spread the *Good News* of God to all nations of the world. Jesus sends them ahead to every town and place where He "*Himself intended to go.*" The disciples' mission is to prepare the way for people to receive the coming of Jesus.

So we also have been commissioned, through our Baptism, to be disciples to all nations in the world to bring the *Good News* of God, announcing the reign of God's kingdom. Our life of faith begins in the waters of Baptism where we die to sin and are claimed by God as His children, then rise with Christ to new life. This fits in well with today's Second Reading from St. Paul's letter to the Galatians. It is only through the Cross of Christ that St. Paul can boast that he is crucified to the things of this world and is made a new creation in Christ.

May we embrace fully, as St. Paul did, the calling of our Baptism. Just as Jesus sent the seventy disciples to preach that "*God's kingdom is at hand,*" so have we been commissioned, through our Baptism, to be laborers to preach God's kingdom by our words, by our actions and by how we live our faith.

Jesus sends the disciples out in pairs so that they can help and support one another. He is showing us that none of us needs to be solely dependent on our individual strengths, but we can also rely on the strengths and support of our faith community in our Holy Catholic Church.

Before sending the disciples on their mission, Jesus prepares them for their travels. Jesus first tells the disciples that the "*harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few.*" When Jesus looks out at the world He sees that the harvest is great. This is even

truer today. Unfortunately, there are still too few labourers in Christ's vineyard today. Jesus needs more helpers, helpers like you and me.

Jesus tells the disciples to pray and "*ask the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into His harvest.*" Today, we pray for more vocations for priests and religious sisters to go out to work in the missions. But lay people are also definitely called, through their Baptism, to be missionaries as well. Missionary work is *not* reserved exclusively for priests and sisters but it is for all baptized Catholics.

You may say, "*Me, a missionary, impossible, I don't have the training.*" The disciples Jesus sent out were certainly no specialists as missionaries. They had no training. Nor did they have a great education. Yet they became His instruments, co-workers with Jesus in spreading the Kingdom of God.

After Mass, when we are sent out to be missionaries, most often we think of the word missionary in the sense of going to a foreign land and bringing the news about Christ to those who have never heard of Him. But, it is so much more than that in today's world! We can be missionaries wherever we are, in our homes and with our families, at our places of work and school, at our places of leisure and recreation, as well as right here in our parish and in our community.

How many people today are deeply wounded and in need of healing and in need of someone to take the time to visit them? How many people are without hope? How many people are without faith? How many people are without someone to listen to them in their suffering, and in their loneliness? Many people hunger to be wanted, to be loved, to be recognized, and to be accepted for who they are.

The harvest is there, everywhere, even in the most unlikely places. The harvest may be in your home, among the sick or the addicted, those in prison, those without hope, those who hunger to be loved, and among the poor and suffering. How great is the need to bring the good news of hope and salvation, of peace and healing, of joy and communion to all people?

The only requirement for you to be a missionary is a heartfelt desire to bring the Good News of Christ to others, to love people and to have faith and trust in God. Every day is a harvest day and in every place there are things that you can do for Jesus, things which will otherwise remain undone. We are all responsible to do even a small

part of our Lord's work and it is up to us to reap the harvest for Christ. *You can be a missionary to these children of God.*

Being a missionary does not mean, as we so often thought and did in the past, bringing Christ as we understand Him and imposing our views on people. It means bringing the spirit of Jesus within us, being Christ to those around us, and looking for the signs of God and the values of Christ already present in our culture, including right here in our own homes and our community. It means not condemning people or things that we see as different; it means bringing people to an awareness of our God and our Saviour who is already in their lives.

When Jesus sent His disciples out, He warned them that they were *"like lambs being sent into the midst of wolves."* Jesus knew that His disciples would meet with opposition and failure. Jesus Himself was no stranger to opposition. Everywhere He went, His enemies pursued His steps, but He did not allow them to turn Him away from His mission of shepherding the flock His Father had entrusted to Him. As well, we can expect no less than what God, the Father, expected of His Son. We will meet opposition, but like Jesus, we are called on not to turn away.

In His final instruction, Jesus tells the disciples to give a message of *"peace"* upon the homes of the people and those who live within the homes. Working for peace means welcoming people close to us, and even those who are strangers to us, those who are our neighbours, even those who annoy us or who provoke anguish within us.

To take the path of peace is to accept people as they are, with all their limitations and weaknesses. The people we need to make peace with are not only our families, our friends and our community, but our enemies as well. The disciples' mission, and it is our mission as well, is to bring the peace of Christ wherever we go and to all we meet.

As we strive to share the Good News of the Gospel, we are called to have a gentle and accepting attitude toward others. Those who are open to what we have to offer will come to know the blessings and peace of God's kingdom. Those who decline or reject what we have to offer will have to answer to God for their refusal.

Those who elect to spread the Good News of God's Kingdom and bring peace and reconciliation to all people of the world can rejoice that their names will be, as it

says in today's Gospel reading, "*written in heaven.*" *Do you see your name written in heaven?*