

Homily for the 14th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Usually when we think of those who were sent on mission in the Bible to preach the Good News, we probably think of the 12 Apostles or of St. Paul. But, in our Gospel today, we hear about these “72 others” appointed by Jesus to go ahead of Him to every town and place He intended to visit to prepare the way. We have no list of who they were, just the explanation of their mission, as we just heard. Now this was definitely an exciting mission for these 72, because they came back rejoicing, amazed that even demons were subject to them because of the name of Jesus. And yet for as thrilling of a mission as this one was, it was also clearly a difficult one, for in Jesus’ parting words to them He says, “Go on your way; behold, I am sending you like lambs among wolves.” That phrase is haunting. Certainly many would not have accepted their preaching, and they would have been rejected and mistreated, just like Jesus Himself was at times. But He sends them anyway because all these people too have a right to hear the Good News that the Kingdom of God has been inaugurated in the person of Jesus Christ.

This whole idea of their mission of being one that's exciting and joyful sometimes, and at other times difficult and marked with suffering, got me thinking about our lives as disciples of Jesus as well. You know, sometimes it's a delightful thing to be a Christian – to know how much God loves us, to feel His peace in our hearts, to experience His mercy when we have sinned. And yet, at other times it is so tough and demanding to follow Jesus as He calls us to. For example, as we heard last week and again this week: we have to carry our crosses daily. We are called to live according to God's will and not our own preferences and desires. And we are sent as lambs out into a world we know all too well is full of wolves that think we are naïve and old-fashioned. Yes, being a follower of Jesus means in this life that we will know joy and sorrow.

When I was away on my 2-week retreat over a month ago, I wrote a poem that speaks to this very truth. I never wrote a poem before, but I was inspired to do so. I entitled it: "The Lord's Playground for the Children of God", and I'd like to share it with you:

Children,
 come hither – the Lord beckons

Children,
 come yon – your Lord is calling

“What is it He wants”, you ask?

“Come and see”.

Some days His healing feels like a day on the playground.
 Other days, you feel ground – down, with no play.

But His Spirit is everlasting – eternal
 And keeps us eternally strong in heaven’s long view.

So, suffer well, dear children.
 And know that it is not in vain.
 For our Savior has gone before us,
 Whose Kingdom shall ever reign.

God bless you.