

Homily 9 11 21 Transitional Diaconate Ordination

Numbers 3:5-9 Acts 6: 1-7b Luke 10: 1-9

Recently, Catholic Charities in San Antonio announced that Afghan refugee families would be coming to the city over the next year. We can share resources and donations to support them, but the most important gift we could give them now is simply peace, a peace we can share in Christ. Regardless of their religious background, peace is universal. That peace is within us. It is a gift from God to give others.

In the gospel today Jesus sends out his disciples to announce a new world, a new covenant among the people. Their main gift to others is the peace only Jesus can give.

It is clear that Jesus wants those he sends to take nothing with them, to be completely dependent on God first and then on the hospitality and care of others. In effect, the missionary must be one who is receiving as much as giving. You being ordained to the diaconate today, always remember that people have as much or even more to give you than you have to give them.

Jesus is sending disciples to proclaim the Good News but also to understand that it is in the exchange of gifts that the good news happens. Pope Francis says that “in the Church, it is necessary that each person ‘lower’ himself or herself, so as to serve our brothers and sisters along the way.” In a real way, the disciple who proclaims and who ministers mirrors the crucified one, who is stripped on the

cross and keeps nothing. Yet in that very act of complete giving of self is the Good News.

Of the three synoptic Gospels, only Luke in today's reading gives us this account of a preaching expedition involving 72 disciples. Jesus sends them two by two. They have to share the responsibility and complement each other in ministry. Ministry is not carried out all by one person.

The number of disciples, 72, is symbolic. Chapter Ten of the Book of Genesis presents a list of seventy-two descendants of Noah and it is said that all the tribes of the earth are descended from them. Luke is using this number 72 to indicate that every single person has the responsibility to be a disciple and every disciple is called to the whole world. It is not the task of a privileged group, a clerical caste. Pope Francis often warns the ordained not to become a clerical caste, above others, special and set apart for special privilege. And he says: "Synodality, as a constitutive element of the Church, offers us the most appropriate interpretive framework for understanding the hierarchical ministry itself. If we understand, as Saint John Chrysostom says, that 'Church and Synod are synonymous', inasmuch as the Church is nothing other than the 'journeying together' of God's flock along the paths of history towards the encounter with Christ the Lord, then we understand too that, within the Church, no one can be 'raised up' higher than others." No, the responsibility for evangelization belongs to us all. We are not set over others but with and for others. And more than this, according to Luke all the tribes of the earth are to be evangelized without exception. The Jews of his day thought that salvation was something only for

themselves. Preaching the gospel is always a missionary effort to everyone, especially those not like us.

It is clear from this gospel that we do not need a lot to do our work of sharing Jesus. The mission of the 72: ... carry no money, no sack, no sandals...always bring peace...if rejected, just shake off the dust and move on. This is your model and your challenge today on your road of ordained ministry.

There is never enough to reach out to the world. We always need to recognize God makes up what we lack. Luke writes this to give guidelines for the missionary activity of his time which is described in the Acts reading. Rely completely on God for strength, sustenance, and protection. We are sent to be Christ for others. Our only possession to take with us is our peace, the gift of the Risen Lord. To be Christ is to give peace.

In this country we often define ourselves on where we live and what we have. However, the disciples only take one thing: peace is their only possession. Why peace? It is a sign of the Kingdom, a sign of perfect unity and harmony with God. That same peace is offered to humanity at the creation of the world. Jesus comes to restore the perfect peace and harmony lost at Eden. Peace was the first post-Resurrection gift of Jesus. Peace comes from the restored relationship with God.

Missionaries, in this gospel, are making a difference beyond themselves. They are part of something larger. They prepare the people to receive Jesus. Whether one rejects or accepts the invitation does not depend on the messenger, because it is simply a sign of the Kingdom at hand, like the healing of the sick. The disciples later say

that they expelled demons in Jesus' name. God breaks in against this evil with a new world order, a peace, and breaks evil's grasp.

You are disciples. Don't procrastinate! The mission is urgent! Accept whatever generosity and hospitality is given. Have confidence you do God's work and God will provide what you need.

The gospel speaks of a Kingdom at hand. The harvest is great, which means the possibilities are enormous for doing good. The kind of harvest Jesus speaks about is to heal, cure, spread peace, announce the Good News. God's harvest is measured by goodness, care for others and growth toward new life. Abundance is not by what we have but by the quality of our relationships.

What are the keys to being a disciple, to helping establish the Kingdom of God? Don't worry about things, be satisfied with what you have, when rejected don't lash back but simply move on, and your main goal in life is to be a messenger of the peace of Christ. Others can live their lives suspicious, denigrating others, dividing, judging, and you nevertheless must do your part to help conquer the demons of hate, prejudice, selfishness and division. That is being a missionary.

Later, Jesus says don't rejoice because you healed someone or the demons are subject to you, but because your names are written in heaven. You are part of something much bigger than you. It is not just you. It is you letting God do it through you. You will certainly be happy this way.

May this day of ordination bring you happiness and confidence that God will accomplish in you the good work you begin now.