

Homily for 11 July 2018, Feast of St. Benedict / Sajnos, nincs magyar fordítás!

(Mt 10:1-7) While the Old Testament was in force, Israel was divided into twelve tribes. The patriarch of each tribe was one of Jacob's descendants. The Church is the new Israel. That's why it was also founded upon twelve men, our Lord's apostles, with Peter heading up the list. As apostles, the Twelve were destined to become the great high priests of the New Covenant. You might think that this distinction entitled them to certain liberties that other disciples did not enjoy. On the contrary, they weren't even allowed to bring money along on their missionary journey in today's gospel, nor food, nor a change of clothes, nor even a staff to discourage an angry dog unleashed upon them. That would be like showing up here at summer camp with nothing but yourself – no suitcase, no sleeping bag, no tooth brush.

The fathers here at St. Michael's are also singled out from among other men to become priests of God. We might be tempted to think that this distinction entitles us to certain liberties that others don't enjoy. On the contrary, priests should be held to a stricter standard. The following quotation is from the Rule of St. Benedict; whose feast we are celebrating today. "If the Abbot desires to have a priest or a deacon ordained," writes Benedict, "let him select from among his monks one who is worthy to discharge the priestly office. But let the one who has been ordained be on his guard against arrogance and pride, and let him not attempt to do anything but what is commanded him by the Abbot, knowing that he is now all the more subject to the discipline of the Rule." (Rule of St. Benedict, Ch. 62)

The provisions bestowed upon individuals in a community can be the source of discord. Here is what St. Benedict wrote on the subject: "It is written [in the Acts of the Apostles], "Distribution was made to everyone according as each had need" (4:35). We do not say by this that respect should be had for persons – God forbid! – but regard for infirmities. Let him who has need of less thank God and not give way to sadness, but let him who has need of more, humble himself for his infirmity, and not be elated for the indulgence shown him; and thus all the members will be at peace. Above all, let not the evil of murmuring appear in the least word or sign for any reason whatever. If anyone be found guilty herein, let him be placed under very severe discipline." (Ibid., Ch. 34) In exceptional circumstances (Ibid, Ch. 61), Benedict does allow for censures provided they are made with great charity and humility. Murmuring, however, offends against the peace and harmony that are nearly indispensable in our common quest for God. So let's not complain today! Given the force of habit, some of us here may even be wondering if this goal is possible to achieve. Well, there is one secret to success. Count your blessings, not your afflictions! Amen!