

One year on St. Patrick's Day, I believe it was my second year at St. Augustine's seminary, 4 of us seminarians went to a restaurant to have a meal together. We were in Scarborough at the time, and not having such a diverse restaurant selection as you do here in Port Credit, we went to a Boston Pizza, something a bit calmer than an Irish Pub. While we were eating, one of the guys identified ourselves as seminarians to the waitress. This was new to me. In public, I rarely identified myself as a seminarian and I guess there was a fear in revealing who I was and what I was studying. But, in stating this fact to the waitress, a dialogue opened up, and she revealed to us that she was Catholic but had fallen away from practicing the faith. I was timid, not saying much, but someone who was more lively encouraged her to start praying again and to go to one of those familiar prayers, the rosary, which could kickstart a relationship with Jesus. She had informed us that she used to carry one around but she had misplaced it. I had one in my pocket and something inside of me said, "Give her the rosary", and so filled with some sort of courage, I gave her my rosary. In moving from a state of timidity to a state of boldness, I had realized "The Lord is with me." Her response was silence and she began to tear up. On the journey back to the seminary, we could not stop talking about this encounter and returning to the seminary that evening, we shared this story with those we met.

We can imagine that the feeling of the seventy two when they were set apart for the work in which the Lord had sent them to do would be fear. This fear would arise from the fact that they had been instructed by Our Lord to not carry the things that would bring them comfort...would bring them some sort of reassurance. On top of that, they were told they were going out as sheep in the midst of wolves...not the most comforting words to start off on a missionary journey. However, throughout the missionary journey, they too would have moved from fear to courage in order to go from village to village realizing that the "Lord was with them". They return to the Lord with joy recounting the great works and miracles that they were able to perform.

This missionary joy which I had felt when I returned to the seminary, which the seventy-two disciples felt as they returned from their mission is "the Gospel joy which enlivens the community of disciples." It is a joy that comes from knowing that wherever we go, no matter what our circumstances are, or our state in life, that the Lord is with us.

Today, the Lord is calling us forth from our own comfort zone in order to reach all those in need of the Good News knowing that the Lord is with us. Pope Francis, in his letter *The Joy of the Gospel*, recounts a message that he has given on numerous occasions almost setting the tone for his Pontificate: "I prefer a Church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a Church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security."

This missionary impulse, no doubt, will stir in us various feelings. It is a challenge to who we are as Christians but we can be assured of the Lord being with us as we go forth into the world. The world we are in needs God's love...it needs to encounter Christ and to believe in him. It is we, who are here in this place being nourished by Word and

Sacrament that are receiving this call. It is the love that we receive in the Eucharist that we are called to share and not keep it to ourselves.

The Eucharist that we celebrate is the source and summit, not only of our life, but of our mission. We cannot approach the Eucharistic table without being drawn into the mission which, beginning in the heart of God, is meant to reach all people. It is in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass that we hear the greeting, "The Lord be with you" continuously. Our Lord is reassuring us that he will be with us in our mission to bring the good news to all. Truly, nothing is more beautiful than to know Christ and to make him known to others.