

St Pius & St Anthony 15th Sunday Ordinary Time Year B2

Jesus sends the apostles on mission today and I can imagine this operation checklist exchange going on between Peter and James. Peter asks, "Check our supplies: No food?" James says "Check"! Peter says "No money in belts"? James says, "Check" Peter asks, "No sack" James says, "Check" Peter asks, "No second tunic?" James says, "Check". Then Peter announces, "Good: Ready for takeoff." This is unlike any mission we would imagine or prepare for this way. ***"Got Nothing Loaded, so let's go!"*** Except that this is Jesus' mission and the Kingdom of God we are talking about. Isn't our experience when taking trips, to load up our baggage full, and pile on packages before we go? Think about your last vacation trip. Was it a commercial or movie that had the scene of the family members meeting in the driveway to load up the car with their bags, and one member (I'm not pointing any fingers) has three suitcases, and the father says. "We are only staying overnight!" Isn't that our tendency to accumulate and load up our own stuff, just in case? You never know what you might need, so take it along anyway.

So Jesus prepares the apostles for their mission in His Name, by ensuring they take "Nothing". What is that all about? Why does it seem like He is setting them up for failure. It would be understandable if they asked Him back, "What Jesus- at least give us something to work with on this job!" But Jesus is telling them that they have everything they need: His Name. It is His Mission-His Ministry. He is, everything they need. This is a mission of faith, a training for them in Trust. He will provide for all they need. They just simply need to trust Him to supply it. He will give them everything they need, as they need it. Maybe not until the very moment when it is called for, But He will come across for them. For example, later, they will not need to pack carriages of food-bread and fish to feed over 5,000 people at a revival. No, Jesus will make even just a little starter set of five loaves and two fish multiply to be enough to take care of such a huge crowd. Or as we heard two weeks ago, (Mark 4:35-41), the apostles do not need to load up their boat with extra oars, floatation devices, or hatches to batten down the deck when they run into storms on the sea. No, Jesus will provide for them by 'calming the waves and wind' outright! Jesus sends them out with nothing, so that they can grow in their trust of Him – Not to rely upon their own resources, but to rely and lean upon Him. This trust in Him, is reflected in the perfect prayer he taught us, the "Our Father" where pray for **'daily'** bread, not loading up on weekly or monthly portions, but simply trusting day by day that He will provide what we need. And He does!

But here is an interesting thing about Jesus' mission instructions. He really doesn't send them out with nothing, He actually tells them to take a couple of things. What are they? Well, He did say to not take along food, no sack either, no money in their belts, and no **second** tunic (change of clothes). But He does allow something- one tunic, a belt, sandals, and a walking stick. Basically, just the clothes that they are wearing. Yet, I see a deeper significance by Jesus explicitly mentioning 'sandals and a walking stick'. I hear Him saying that He wants them on the move – really getting out – not just a spin around the block, but really travelling and covering ground, going out to villages and towns all around, a thorough tour of all the area. Not just going next door and coming back – Done it. No, by Jesus emphasizing the sandals and stick, He meant for them to really put on the miles: Go out! I suspect that farther venture is understood behind his mention of possible rejection. If they are rejected in one village, then get right on going to the next. So, they are to cover some good territory.

But I also see a deeper significance in the 'sandals and stick' details by thinking that those instruments factor huge in the life of Moses. By Jesus saying 'Put on sandals', maybe He was saying, "You have been in the very presence of God-HIM-Jesus"- and like Moses encountering the living God in the burning bush, now, Apostles, go off and tell others what you have experienced-share Me with them. Similarly, seen also with Moses is his sign of authority-his walking staff. Moses as leader holding a staff (*for young fans of the Ninja Turtles-think of Master Splinter and His staff, or how about Star War Fans, think of Jedi Master Yoda with his cane- or our church Bishops and their shepherd staffs*). But God sent Moses on mission to confront Pharoah (set God's people free) with only a staff. Yet, that Staff/Rod was an instrument of God providing all that Moses would need. Think of the great wonders accomplished with his simple staff. Moses' staff in Exodus 4:2 changed into a snake and back, in Exodus 7:15 & 7:20 his staff struck the Nile river and it became blood, in Exodus 8:16ff Moses struck sand with staff and the dust became lice, in Exodus 9:23 Moses stuck the staff up in air toward heaven and hail came down, and in Exodus 10:13, Moses stretched out staff over sky and clouds of locusts filled the air, In Exodus 17:1-7, Moses struck rock with staff and a spring of water cane forth. So, I see Jesus telling them to carry along a staff, as a reminder of what God CAN do - when we follow and trust Him. Like Yahweh telling Moses, "I am with you" (Exodus 3:12), by Jesu sending them with staffs, He was assuring them, that He was with them- He would provide for them. And Jesus did. I like how only in Luke's gospel we have a follow-up quiz later at the Last Supper, when Jesus reminds them of great care of them. There He asks in Luke 22:35, "*When I sent you forth withoutwere you in need of anything?*" "*No, nothing,*" they

replied.” Likely they needed reminding at the Last supper, because of what they were about to go through with His arrest, death and resurrection coming.

But this mission of trust is not only for the apostles, it is for all of us. We often rely only upon our own resources, yet Jesus calls us to let go and lean upon Him. We are to go serve on mission by sharing Him with others. He will provide for our needs. We need to trust Him more. If we are serving Him, doing His work/mission, then He will cover us. I like to think that since it is His mission, His Work we conduct in His Name, then He does not want us to fail. He would not send out a delegate in His Name to look bad. No, He will take care of that one, and fulfill His will through the disciple’s trust in Him. Not easy, but we have to load up less, and listen more to where He sends us. Again, He will provide if we trust Him.