

St Pius-St Anthony 15th Sunday Ordinary Time Year B

I would sure enough sympathize with the apostles today if I heard that they scratched their heads after hearing Jesus' mission instructions, asking Jesus, "Okay, go on mission –can do, preach repentance –can do, comfort the sick-make peace-calm demons-can do, but take nothing along with us? I suggest Jesus would say, "No you aren't going with nothing, Take me- I am with you-I will provide." Recall that is what is happening if they truly go out in His Name. Everything will be provided-they have to trust Jesus. This mission assignment reminds me of those cooking challenge shows, where contestants line up and the host tells them, "Chefs, today's challenge is that you have to make a vegetarian entrée centered on mystery ingredients: Licorice and Mushrooms. Yet, somehow....somebody wins the show (But do the judges really eat the stuff?) I think of the apostles kind of like those creative cooks. I imagine the apostles taking up Jesus' mission with trust in Him, Yes, but also being blessed with ingenuity and thrift- They will make it work out by the grace of God. They likely pull everything off with Jesus, a lot like a hero of mine when I was a kid. A favorite show of mine was McGyver – he always completed his missions, somehow making do with whatever was available. So, Jesus sends out the apostles and they make it- doing good ministry and they come back to tell Jesus all about it-so it worked out. Jesus provided!

A friend reminds me that there was an element of test/challenge to Jesus' mission command here: much like God sent Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, but intervened to provide the needed ram later. God first wished to see the willingness and trust of Abraham. Maybe having no real intention of Abraham following all the way through. So, with the apostles, they may have felt inadequately charged, or supplied, but they trusted and went ahead as Jesus commanded them (they could have gotten to the main road and Jesus called them back, 'Okay, you proved your willingness to tackle the challenge, come on back in.' The apostles' mission was successful, because we will hear that when they return (Mark 6:30), they report all good things back to Jesus; they didn't return to Jesus complaining about problems- we were short of oil for anointing, we ran out of paper, or Dead Sea area has such bad internet connections. This is Mark's gospel, which just says they returned and reported to Jesus, but I like how in Luke's gospel Jesus gives them a little 'after action debrief'; a type comment card survey of the disciples afterward. In Luke 22:35 Jesus asks them, "When I sent you out

without purse or bag or sandals, did you lack for anything?" (Survey says..) "No," they answered." Jesus even got them to sign off on good reviews! -

I find that their 'living' trust in Jesus, that is their message . We didn't hear of any specific teaching they were to communicate. Mark says 'they preached repentance' (Mark 6:12). What is that? Repentance is changing hearts and turning to God. It is simple and humble living dependent on God. Jesus sent them out as walking billboards announcing 'Turn to God-Trust in God – Look at us-God works it out. We rely on Jesus-He provides'. Recall the supply list again, he gave them of stuff to take along- nothing but sandals, staff and cloak- no money, no food, no duffel sack, not even empty one (Jesus knows how we humans hoard-how any empty space fills itself? For example, how long does a garage, drawer or closet stay empty after you clean it out?) Why send them out that way? Because, His message to the world is His Presence. He wants to communicate that He is all they need. He doesn't want them to show up with their own agenda for folks, their own self-interested 'bag of tricks' or briefcase of flashy self- promotions. No, just Jesus' presence-I am with you he says, I will provide-You are under my name. What did they do? Their assignment included 'anointing-comforting-healing the sick', 'casting out demons' and living stably, contentedly, & in peace wherever they were (that was the part about keeping to one host's house, and shaking dust if rejected-I understand that to mean 'be helpful in the home you stay'-maybe McGyver-like contribute in whatever way you can uniquely and creatively to help out every way you can). They were to embody peace, work for good, be constructive for others; the world sure needs that. Christians didn't show up with an aggressive take-over mentality (I'll show you), raging bull in crystal shop- No, that was actually what demons did. Apostles were charged to calm and cast terrorizing/divisive demons if needed. And the shaking dust meant moving on if people reject you. There is too much good to be done to get stuck in such a tussle. I think the First Christians success in spreading the gospel so widely and quickly, was that there goodness and simplicity was so clearly seen by others. Imagine these apostles showing up in town offering to help with anything, speaking only good things, caring for the sick, helping the tormented. They'd be welcomed anywhere. So think about how these peaceful missionaries were received? I love what an early Roman emperor named Julian reports to one of his Temple Generals- it gives testimony to how the Christians were perceived by nonbelievers. He wrote it in 362, and he wanted to set a fire under his pagan temple priests to motivate them to good works, because he felt they were being shamed by the Christians'

practice of love of neighbor/God. He wrote, *“Observe how the kindness of Christians to strangers, their care for the burial of their dead, and the simplicity of their lifestyle has done the most to advance their cause? Each of these things, I think, ought really to be practiced by us. For it is disgraceful to us when the impious Galileans [Christians] support our poor in addition to their own.”* It is a backhanded compliment, but the pagan emperor even, is sitting up, noticing the peace and loving trust that Jesus’ disciples displayed by their simple lives, witnessing to Jesus ‘preaching repentance’ so humbly. Maybe today, Jesus is asking us to take up such a mission of trust- to Go in His name, take nothing along but Him. Sharing Christ with others by our simple interactions with them. Jesus will be enough. He will provide.