

## **14<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle C: 4 July, 2010**

In today's Gospel, Luke paints an interesting picture of early discipleship and its concept of mission. We witness Jesus sending out disciples in pairs going from town to town proclaiming that "the Kingdom of God is at hand". The description that is given to us from Luke portrays a sense of urgency in the disciples as they go about God's work. They had been told if they encounter any resistance or a lukewarm reception, they are to move on to the next town. They are not to waste their time in trying to convince skeptics or fret over any opposition to their efforts at conversion. Because it is clear from the words of Jesus that the proclamation of the message is to be an end in itself. They are asked to just plant the seeds and let him, our Lord, worry about the harvest. They were in essence instructed not to agonize about any personal successes or failures as the peoples either accepted or rejected their message.

And why does this seem a little strange to our modern ears? Perhaps, it's because as a nation we are often too concerned with excelling, the achievement of goals and the accumulation of wealth. It seems that our egos are almost always getting in the way, as we want others to become aware of the "good" that we have accomplished. Perhaps, we also see the accomplishment of goals as a means of enhancing our desire to be respected, liked and admired; therefore, once again feeding our egos.

However, when it comes to matters of faith, there is no place for that kind of attitude. We need to remember that the gifts of grace that come from God are freely given and are not rewards for our earthly works. They aren't earned through straining or some clever insight because they come to us freely as a gift from God and that we are expected to pass them along if given the opportunity. The true joy of discipleship comes not necessarily from accomplishing the work of evangelization but in knowing that we are loved because we tried to proclaim the Good News. It doesn't matter if we "succeed" or not or whether we have been "productive". Our "job" is to just plant the seeds--- seeds of love & faithfulness, seeds of kindness & hope and trusting that God will do the rest.

And that's a good thing for two (2) obvious reasons. One, we won't have to spend the remainder of our lives wondering if we've made a difference in this world or in the lives of those we love. We can rest assured that God is pleased that we made the effort and that we gave it our best shot, imperfect as it might be. I don't believe that God is going to look at some final evangelization score card but rather will look to see whether we got off the bench and into the game before awarding a "final" mark. He's probably more interested in seeing if we tried to be faithful in carrying out his message and if we planted a few "seeds" along our journey through this life.

Secondly, perhaps it's good that we don't see our "results" when it comes to matters of faith, especially for those of us who are clergy. Because we might often find our egos, drive and pride stained and smeared with our tears of despair. And, you as laity need to know that your priest's and deacon's are proclaiming the kingdom, clearly, authentically and passionately and that we are doing so for the right reasons. And not being driven by some artificial goals such as increases in attendance, donations or membership or to serve some personal desire to "make it" to a higher ecclesial rank. So, if you haven't figured it out by now let me give you a head's-up: God demands from those of us who are ordained a clear heart as we go about sowing the seeds of faith and not a conniving mind.

God is asking for our help in evangelizing and proclaiming the Good News because: "The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few". So, let's not be too proud of our successes or too depressed at our failures. But rather, let us go about God's work with the following quotation from Paul on our lips: "May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ". Let's keep that thought in mind as we leave here today: "May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ".