

14th Sunday of Ordinary Time: We Are the Seventy-two

And the Seventy-two returned, shouting with joy, "Lord, even the demons were subject to us." Jesus joined their enthusiasm, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from the sky. I have given you power, but do not rejoice because evil spirits are subject to you, but rejoice because your names are written in heaven."

Who are the Seventy-two? And why did Jesus send this number, Seventy-two? In the Book of Numbers, chapter 11, Moses is told to gather Seventy elders who will be given a share of the Spirit that Moses has to help govern the people. Two men, Eldad and Medad, also received a share of the Spirit, thus Seventy-two. Jesus sent out Seventy-two disciples giving them all a share in his Spirit. I would think that the Twelve were part of this number. The other Sixty must have been disciples very close to the Lord.

The Seventy-two were to bring the Good News to those in their immediate world. They brought the message that Jesus was transforming the world. They showed that evil was being defeated by curing the sick and expelling demons. When they returned, wild with joy, Jesus joined right in, rejoicing with them. The victory of the Father had begun.

Who are the Seventy-two? We are the Seventy-two. We are the people who proclaim that the Great Hope of Mankind has become a reality. Jesus Christ has conquered evil Jesus Christ has died for us. Jesus Christ still lives with us. We have experienced the Lord and have become the joyful evangelizers of the Kingdom.

But, we may ask, where is this Kingdom? There is much pain and suffering in the world occasioned by man's in humanity towards man. There are always wars being waged throughout the world. The innocent are wars first victims.

Closer to home, how do we proclaim the Kingdom among our own children who no longer go to Church and who haven't even had their children, our grandchildren baptized? How are we to deal with these, our own children, who reject God? How do we deal with those who have left Catholicism to worship somewhere where there are far less demands on morality?

In giving instructions to the Seventy-two before he sent them out, Jesus told them to enter a house and say, "Peace to this house." If a peaceful person lives there, your peace will rest upon him. If not it will return to you. The Lord is telling us to look carefully for the good within all and nurture this good, We are to be positive. St. Francis de Sales, the gentleman saint said, "You can catch more flies with honey than with vinegar." Benjamin Franklin put this in *Poor Richard's Almanac*, but Francis de Sales lived over a hundred years earlier. St. Francis de Sales wrote this as part of the effort of the Church to return those who had left for the Church back to Roman Catholicism.

If we emphasize with great care and great kindness that which we have in common, then perhaps others will be encouraged to search for other aspects of life we have in common. Let me flesh this out. After spending a great deal of time, effort and even money to raise your children Catholic, one or more of them no longer practice the faith. The vinegar approach will not get you anywhere. Telling them that they are going to burn in hell is not going to convince them to come to Church. But the honey approach will have legs. If you emphasize that they are certainly good parents, doing all they can for their children, and they know you respect them as parents, you are a small step from convincing them that there is infinitely more for their children that only the Lord can provide. You can talk about baptism as being life giving and communion as being spiritual nourishment. Most importantly, let them see your words in how you live your lives. Perhaps, perhaps in God's time, not necessarily your time, a change will come and you will join the Seventy-two in rejoicing.

Perhaps. Perhaps not. Perhaps you will be told to stay out of their affairs. Don't lose your peace. Let it come back to you, and keep praying for your children.

It is the same regarding the immorality in the nation and in the world. We need to be calm. We need to let our peace return to us. At the same time, we need to take stands for the truth. And we need to pray for all those supporting immoral positions.

We cannot allow the reactions of others to our proclaiming the Kingdom determine whether or not we will continue to evangelize. Instead, we need to remember the reaction of the Lord to the Seventy-two when they returned home with such palpable enthusiasm. He joined in with their joy. And he joins in with our joy, when we do our best to serve him.