The Summit Online Exploring the Word

14th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C

GOSPEL

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The Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them out ahead of him, in pairs, to all the towns and places he himself was to visit. He said to them, 'The harvest is rich but the labourers are few, so ask the Lord of the harvest to send labourers to his harvest. Start off now, but remember, I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. Carry no purse, no haversack, no sandals. Salute no one on the road.

'Whatever house you go into, let your first words be, "Peace to this house!" And if a man of peace lives there, your peace will go and rest on him; if not, it will come back to you. Stay in the same house, taking what food and drink they have to offer, for the labourer deserves his wages; do not move from house to house.

'Whenever you go into a town where they make you welcome, eat what is set before you. Cure those in it who are sick, and say, "The kingdom of God is very near to you." But whenever you enter a town and they do not make you welcome, go out into its streets and say, "We wipe off the very dust of your town that clings to our feet, and leave it with you. Yet be sure of this: the kingdom of God is very near." I tell you, on that day it will not go as hard with Sodom as with that town.

The seventy-two came back rejoicing. 'Lord,' they said 'even the devils submit to us when we use your name.' He said to them, 'I watched Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Yes, I have given you power to tread underfoot serpents and scorpions and the whole strength of the enemy; nothing shall ever hurt you. Yet do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you; rejoice rather that your names are written in heaven.'

(Luke 10:1-12, 17-20)

DID YOU KNOW?

Points of interest and Catholic lore

- The image of the vineyard is often used in the Old Testament as an image of God's people. They must be tended to and cultivated well so that the harvest is a rich one.
- The Church has always understood its main function to be one of announcing the Gospel to others. This is the mission of the Church, and the work is carried out by missionaries.
- · All baptised people are called to be a part of this missionary activity of the Church.

EXPLORING THE WORD

At the very end of Luke's Gospel, Jesus' final instruction to the disciples is to proclaim the Good News to all the nations (Luke 24:47). In today's text, it is almost as if Jesus is throwing them into the deep end! They are sent out on their first missionary assignment as raw recruits, with little to help them, but the lessons they learn here will be greatly needed later. Whatever they seek to achieve in Jesus' name, they are given the assistance they need. Jesus, however, reminds them that the crucial factor is not that they are powerful or that they are successful. What really matters is that they are doing the will of God, in Jesus' name, and this is the reason for their ultimate salvation.

- · Explore ways in which the catechumens are like the disciples in this story: not yet fully formed but willing to undertake the mission. What lessons are they learning?
- Do they feel as if they are lambs among wolves? Explore this idea. In what ways in today's society is it 'dangerous' to be a Christian?

MAKING CONNECTIONS

Opportunities for group discussion and personal prayer

- How have you been received into the family of God's people?
- · In what ways are you called to spread the Good News to others?
- At this early stage of the gospel, the disciples are hardly formed yet for the task they are given. Have you ever been given a job to do that set you on a 'steep learning curve'? How did you feel? What was your response? How well did you achieve your task? Share your stories with others.
- · Offer the gift of hospitality to someone this week. Make them welcome and give something of 'the peace of Christ' to them. Reflect on how you yourself are enriched by this, as well as the recipient of your hospitality.
- · Use the gospel acclamation as the basis of your prayer this week:

May the peace of Christ reign in my heart and may the fullness of his message live in me.

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SHARING THE TRADITION

A closer look at the Scripture of the day, to see how it makes more explicit God's word to us through the teachings of Jesus Christ

'The harvest is rich but the labourers are few.' All of the faithful are called to live out their vocation in the Church. For some, this means priestly vocation or religious life. For others, it is as a married or single lay person.

• Explore the idea of vocation in all its rich diversity. You could invite a priest or a religious brother or sister to talk about their vocation. Invite a married couple or single lay person to do the same.

A particular vocation within the Church is that of the missionary who leaves their own culture to work in another.

- You could tell the story of some famous saints who have 'gone out to the nations'—for example, St Patrick, St Columban, Francis Xavier, Mother Teresa.
- You could speak about the work of missionaries today, or even invite a returned missioner to be with the group. Resources and personnel may be available from Catholic Mission, Melbourne Overseas Mission or St Columban's Mission Society.

SYMBOLS AND IMAGES

It is made clear in this reading that the message of Jesus is available freely to all. What makes the difference is the way in which people respond to the invitation to faith. Some accept it and peace rests with them. Others reject it and must accept the consequences of that choice.

LIVING THE WORD

Practical ideas for group leaders to employ in connecting Scripture and daily life, with suggestions for music and environment

- In what ways does your community manifest this missionary aspect of the work of the Church or support missionary groups? Are there ways that catechumens can become involved in this?
- Use an image of a pair of sandals and a staff as a focus for prayer. Pray for those who are working as missionaries today. Pray for vocations to religious life. Pray for each other as you too seek to understand your vocation. A suitable song could be 'Take Christ to the World' (*GA* 369). Conclude with the prayer of exorcism in the *RCIA* at §94F.

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