

15th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B

GOSPEL

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Jesus made a tour round the villages, teaching. Then he summoned the Twelve and began to send them out in pairs giving them authority over the unclean spirits. And he instructed them to take nothing for the journey except a staff – no bread, no haversack, no coppers for their purses. They were to wear sandals but, he added, ‘Do not take a spare tunic.’ And he said to them, ‘If you enter a house anywhere, stay there until you leave the district. And if any place does not welcome you and people refuse to listen to you, as you walk away shake off the dust from under your feet as a sign to them.’ So they set off to preach repentance; and they cast out many devils, and anointed many sick people with oil and cured them.

(Mark 6:7-13)

DID YOU KNOW?

Points of interest and Catholic lore

- Jews often had to pass through pagan territory that surrounded their own lands. The gesture of shaking the dust from their sandals was a common one when Jews passed from pagan lands into the lands of Israel.
- The word *apostle* comes from a Greek word for being sent out.
- Some Christian sects and denominations take this text as the reason they send out people in pairs on missionary activity to spread the Gospel.
- The instruction to the disciples to take only sandals and a staff symbolises their complete dependence. Jesus is to be their bread, their clothing, their wealth.

EXPLORING THE WORD

Up until this point in Mark’s Gospel, the disciples have been travelling with Jesus, listening to his teaching and witnessing his actions. Now they are called to take a more active role. They have watched him drive out demons and cure the sick. Now they are called on to repeat, in their own lives and mission, exactly what he does himself. This is a great test of their response to what they have learnt thus far. They are to take nothing with them but a staff and sandals, the symbols of the wandering missionary. Nothing else is necessary; they rely on God as they follow Jesus. When they are accepted by people, they are to remain with them, a sign that the kingdom of God is near. When they encounter those who reject them, they are to simply shake off the dust and continue the journey. As we saw in last week’s gospel, nothing can be achieved where there is no faith.

- Jesus advises not to get upset by rejection but to simply move on. How do you cope with rejection?
- How might we understand the call to simplicity of living today? What concrete actions can be taken to live more simply and more sustainably? In what ways is living this way a reflection of the gospel and faith in Christ?

MAKING CONNECTIONS

Opportunities for group discussion and personal prayer

- How can you live more simply with only the things you need rather than the things you want?
- How do you feel when people don’t listen to you? Do you always really listen to others?
- Have you ever been thrust into a new job or had to take on a responsibility without much preparation? How did you cope? What mistakes did you make? What did you learn from this experience? Was it a valuable experience for you? Share your stories with others.
- Find ways to share your faith and your journey with others this week. This is taking a risk and you may be ridiculed. Are you able to rise to the challenge?
- Today’s gospel acclamation makes a wonderful prayer for this week:

*May the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ
enlighten the eyes of our heart
that we may see how great is the hope
to which we are called.*

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

This is the first of the gospel calls to the Church to become a missionary people—people who take the message of Jesus and spread it. The Acts of the Apostles, written by St Luke as a second volume to his gospel, tells the story of the early spread of the Church into lands beyond those reached by Jesus himself. Since those first days, the Church has been missionary. Some of the great early saints were missionary figures.

- You could tell the stories of great saints like St Paul, St Patrick, St Columban, St Columba, St Francis Xavier, Matteo Ricci or others.
- You could explore the work of mission organisations like the [St Columbans Mission Society](#), [Melbourne Overseas Mission](#) or [Catholic Mission](#). How can you support their work?

In the local Church, missionary activity is just as vital. Not everyone can travel to far or exotic places, but there are plenty of people locally who need to see, hear and experience the love of God.

- How does the Church in Australia carry on its missionary activity here? You could explore some aspects of bringing God's love to people on our own shores and in our own neighbourhoods, and look at some of the organisations involved in this work. How can you support that work?

SYMBOLS AND IMAGES

Jesus is sending the disciples out on a mission. At the end of the Mass, we too are sent out to continue the mission of Jesus. While we cannot all go to foreign lands and far-off places, being a Christian demands that we share our faith with others and build the kingdom of God, even in small ways, in familiar places.

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 is your own parish 'missionary'? What ministries exist that serve others and spread the Good News? How can catechumens become involved in these?
- Use a pair of leather sandals and the open Scriptures as a focus. Pray for all those who are missionaries in foreign lands, as well as those who carry out the work of mission at home. Pray for each other and your own call to be missionary. A suitable song could be 'The Summons' (GA 502). Conclude with an adaptation of the prayer of

exorcism in the RCIA at §94J.

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