

Thursday's Gospel: Instructions for the Journey

Gospel for Thursday in the 4th
Week of Ordinary Time, and
commentary.

Gospel (*Mk* 6:7-13)

And he called the twelve and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. He charged them to take nothing for their journey except a staff—no bread, no bag, no money in their belts—but to wear sandals and not put on two tunics.

And he said to them, “Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you depart from there. And if any place will not receive you and they will not listen to you, when you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them.”

So they went out and proclaimed that people should repent. And they cast out many demons and anointed with oil many who were sick and healed them.

Commentary

The apostles are literally those who are “sent out,” those who have been chosen by God to bring the good news to the whole world. In today's Gospel passage we find specific instructions for their journey.

The first rule that the Master gives is to go “two by two.” Faith is not individual, but a patrimony of the Church: “For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (*Mt 18:20*). Right from the first centuries, the Christian apostolate has always been a shared endeavor, like the missionaries who never go to distant lands alone.

Secondly, it is important to “take nothing for their journey,” neither food or drink nor money. This is a sign of the freedom of self-giving that enables us to carry out God’s will: “For us to reach God, Christ is the way; but Christ is on the Cross, and to climb up to the Cross we must have our heart free, not tied to earthly things” (Saint Josemaría, *The Way of the Cross*, no. 10).

The only thing a disciple of Jesus should carry on the way is a staff, a symbol of God's support and

protection: “I fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff—they comfort me” (*Ps* 23:4).

These instructions require trust in both God and neighbor and presuppose the practice of hospitality common in early Christian communities. The disciples when carrying out their mission found shelter in families that provided them with everything they needed because “the laborer deserves to be paid” (*Lk* 10:7).

Like the first apostles, today’s Christians also need few things to follow our Lord: a free heart, the family of the Church, and God’s help.

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