

July 3, 2022 – Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time
Gospel of Luke 10:1-12, 17-20
Fr. Brad

So much of the pain and suffering in the world is the product of the abuse of power. The message of love as the Gospel proclaims is so easily sabotaged or short circuited by self interest and pride in our present world. We see this all too often in upper levels of government or among people given large responsibilities over others. Power and control over others are a highly coveted commodity in our broken world. And unfortunately, they often end up in the wrong hands. History has shown we limited human beings are, too often, not well equipped to handle too much power.

In our Gospel Jesus commissions the seventy to go out ahead of him to every town he intended to go through. He gives them power and authority over the enemy and assures them they cannot be hurt. They will be carrying nothing with them, all this with the knowledge they are going into dangerous territory.

They are sent out *'like lambs into the midst of wolves.'* They are to go out carrying nothing...presenting themselves as entirely nonthreatening...and vulnerable to being taken advantage of or even being killed. They were to prepare for both acceptance and rejection.

The Gospel then says the seventy went out and returned with joy saying, *'Lord, in your name, even the demons submit to us.'*

But Jesus cautions them immediately.... *'Do not rejoice at this, that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.'*

In other words, do not rejoice at having the power itself. In other words, **put out of your mind any thoughts of the commercial possibilities.** Rather focus on the deeper reality - - the fact that you have allowed yourself to be a vessel of the love of God and that the Kingdom of God is being proclaimed through you. This is important for us to reflect on as followers of Christ. As frail human beings we need to be wary of our own vulnerabilities to pride and self-aggrandizement. There is a strong message out in our world that seems to promote this latter thinking and endorses and even rewards such behaviour.

As Christians, we see through this as a shallow distortion of the mission of love. It comes down to our decision as to who gets the credit when good things happen. Are we responsible enough to see ourselves as privileged delegates of the dispersal of God's gifts of healing and peacemaking and leaving credit and glory to God? Or will our pride overtake us? *'Do not rejoice at this, that spirits submit to you, but **rejoice that your names are written in heaven.***

As we know that was pride that kept Satan from humbling himself before the Creator God and who infects the world with the temptation to reject authority and thus abuse power - - inevitably bringing with it deception, division, and destruction.

St. Paul boasts of nothing but the Cross of Jesus Christ by which the world has been crucified to him and him to the world.

We are called to be broken down and offered for the service and nourishment of others. That means, the breaking down and breaking away from tendencies towards narcissism, individualism, pride, and self-serving ambition. These are all the things that prevent us from letting go of ourselves **to be truly with others.**

Nevertheless, we all struggle with holding onto things that make us feel secure - - material items or patterns of thinking and behaviour that we feel give us a sense of identity, purpose, and security. Without the Gospel, and subsequent faith in a deeper authority, these become all important for fortifying a sense of identity.

It is the message of the Gospel that frees us from identifying too closely with the ways of the world but rather impels us forward to proclaim an authority beyond our need for control and power. It is Christ who has the power and control. We are called to participate. Our identity is preserved in Him.

In our Christian faith like the seventy, we are clothed with the authority of Christ to cast out the darkness of evil in whatever measure that may be. And we pray that we recognise the wisdom behind retaining a humble sense of stewardship over such a responsibility. The Holy Spirit keeps us faithful to the mission and our hidden identity in Christ, the child of God within us.

It is in this faith that we identify ourselves with Christ, share in His mission of Love, and to whom we attribute all authority. That in itself allows us to do great things with all humility and makes us trustworthy vessels of the healing power of God. In that we can rejoice, and that our names are written in heaven. There is no earthly prize or achievement that can rival that. Amen