

Homily - Jesus sent them out in pairs – we are a missionary Church Mark 6: 7

A few years ago I was in Nazareth in the Holy Land and saw this scene from the gospel acted out by role players, at a place called Nazareth village. It is a religious theme park where study groups can come and get some idea of what was going on in the time of Jesus. They have reconstructed a village in the way it might have been 2000 years ago. They have role players, who are harvesting grapes, pressing oil, making bread, and even a functioning carpenters shop.

Part way through our tour, a horn was sounded and the people all came into the synagogue. We watched as a young man playing the role of Jesus got up and preached a message of loving your neighbor. Members of the synagogue were enraged by his preaching. “How dare you tell us to love those people in Capernaum or Sephoris who have been our enemies for ages. We remember how they have stolen our sheep and never helped us in time of famine – be gone with you “ Jesus was amazed by their lack of faith

Do you remember that from last Sundays reading ? Well , Jesus and his friends were ejected, and we followed them to the edge of town . There Jesus sat them down and encouraged them to go out to neighboring villages, and preach there , and minister to the sick . Travel light he said - only carry a staff – and if people don’t welcome you , move on . But if we sit here and do nothing the good news will never get out , and we will wither on the vine ourselves. Imagine if they hadnt gone out?

It made me realize how courageous these early disciples were . They had just seen their leader rejected by his own people, and he was now asking them to go out , with this same possibility of rejection . Well it seems that they did go , and if you come back next Sunday you will hear how they went !

What we should take from this scripture , is that from the earliest days of the Church we have been a missionary Church. And that’s a bit scary . It’s great being part of a warm friendly congregation like ours . We are meant to enjoy that. It is part of the joy of being a Christian- to experience communion. We have done that well here in our parish . But we know that we are also called to mission. The Church calls some of us to mission in a full time way just as I do as a chaplain in the military and the police . I go out walking with his staff in hand and spend time with soldiers- befriend them – be friend to them , and invariably get asked what I am doing this for and I share with them the stories of gods involvement in my life . David and Margaret Hall are missionaries for us in Timor. Of course, none of us can sustain this missionary activity without your support. So in a broad sense you are part of this distant missionary effort , by providing us with the support and encouragement to continue, and a home base to come back to.

In another sense , closer to home , the gospel calls us to a missionary attitude towards the people who we live and work with. Last year Fr Ray initiated our involvement in the Archdiocesan Connections program. Fr Neil would like us to continue that activity. In

recent months, we have been to meetings with the Archbishop and other parishes where we have shared thoughts on how those of us close to the center of the church, can be connected with those that live on its fringes. We are all too well aware that many people do not participate regularly in the life of our community, and there are even more people in a suburb who have never connected to any faith community. Connections is a simple approach to exploring how we can remain connected, re-establish connection, or offer to connection to these people.

Let me share some initiatives that parishes have been undertaking. In Oxenford parish, people who have shared their contact details with the parish are being phoned and invited to be connected by e-mail. The parish is offering to e-mail its parish bulletin and weekly homilies to all those, who would accept it. In Victoria Point parish, parishioners have offered to take on a role as companions and supporters to young couples who come along to church for their children to be baptized. In the Coorparoo parish they have established formal links between the parish school, and church, by inviting school year groups to sponsor a Sunday mass twice per year. At Clayfield, there is providing supper every Sunday night, after Mass. Of course, in our parish last Christmas, we sent out Christmas card invitations welcoming all those who had participated in Sacramental activities to join us for Christmas. The Archdiocesan Youth ministry team is offering a programme called Walk in the Light, to all young people. The information gained from these connections with the Archdiocese will be passed on to our parish council for consideration of how we as parish might improve our connections with those around us.

I think the most important aspect of all of this is that we have an attitude of desire to be connected or reconnected, with those who might be open to it. **We the gathered should be mindful of the scattered.** Those baptized Catholic will always be our brothers and sisters – even if they are like distant relatives who rarely contact us. They don't cease to be family. Should we ignore them-no? Should we badger them – no? Should we desire connection with them – yes? Our best preaching will always be through actions more than words. In so far as we show concern for the sick, the lonely, and those who approach us for help, we will be preaching the gospel of love for our neighbor.

What should be our attitude be to someone we run into at mass, who we have never seen before. We should have the courage to introduce ourselves with a smile and a handshake. It maybe that person has come to the church for the first time, and is searching for hope.

I'm conscious that the many people have heard this message before, and are practicing it well. May we continue to do so? Pope Benedict in a recent address has said "The church has an inescapable vocation to be prophetic and missionary, and an unavoidable mission to be going forth and announcing good news, especially to those who are struggling." Like the different ministries of Peter and Paul; Communion and Mission are two foundation activities of us being Christian; the gathered and the scattered are both of concern to god and should be of concern to us all.

Oh - don't forget to come back next week and hear how those 12 disciples got on. They were surprised that the mission wasn't as difficult as they thought it would be. Of course, the Holy Spirit was with them as will always be with us, any in any missionary activity.

