

Pastoral Reflection for the Fourteenth Sunday of Ordinary Time

July 3 2022

The Kingdom of God is very near to you.

In last week's Gospel, you may recall, Jesus spoke to those who were ready to sign up and follow him, about the cost of discipleship. They responded by excusing themselves to go home and take care of family issues and maybe then they would come back to follow him. As far as we know, none of them returned. But in today's Gospel text, which follows that one, we see that he did find seventy-two individuals (or however many that symbolic number represents) who took into account the cost and WERE ready to be the advance team for his mission of evangelization. They were still willing, even though he told them again as he sent them out two by two, what a challenge it would be: "I am sending you out like lambs among wolves." What has drawn them to this commitment?

No one who followed Jesus originally did so for the way he died, even though his death is so compelling in its details that we spend a whole week of every year reflecting on it. The first disciples were drawn in by the way he LIVED. Jesus taught with authority and backed up his words with healing actions. He spoke of justice and then treated the poor and the unwelcome with dignity and tenderness. He chose not to fight evil and violence, he absorbed it. He tells his courageous little advance team to speak a message of peace as they go out to the villages where they are sent.

Is there a way WE can speak peace to those who pass through our lives each day? Can we do that for the frazzled super market checkout clerk who is working overtime serving long lines of complaining customers by simply thanking her for her patience and service. Can we do it for the single parent dad who is juggling three tired, restless children in a doctor's office waiting for one of them to get help for an emergency by telling him what beautiful children he has instead of registering faces full of annoyance? Can we do it for the friend who calls us at the most inconvenient time with a problem needing a listening ear? At the end of our day, how many people can we count that we have left with a greater sense of peace than when we encountered them? What kind of morning prayer would it take for us to see ourselves sent into each of our days the way Jesus sent the seventy-two, as missionaries of peace?

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