

HOMILY SUNDAY 14 – C

“Mission of the 72”

(Isaiah 66:10-14; Psalm 66; Galatians 6:14-18; Lk 10:1-12; 17-20)

A young boy was asked what he wanted to be when he grew up. He replied he wanted to become a minister so he could stand up in Church and yell.

What is a missionary? Do you see yourself as one?

Proclaim the kingdom of God as a missionary Church

To be baptized; to be a member of the Church, is to be missionary, to reach out, to spread the Good News. Yet in a world of secularity, pluralism, multiculturalism, political correctness and tolerance, how does one evangelize and carry out this missionary task? The question of what it means to evangelize, to be a missionary is very much in the spotlight today.

Some years back the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate held a series of symposiums in North America on this very topic – *Mission to the Developed World*. Fr. William Steckling, superior general of the Oblates, in his opening address at the symposium in Edmonton, called North America and Europe the most difficult missions in the world.

The gospel today provides us with some helpful criteria for mission. First of all, Jesus sends out his disciples on a mission to prepare the way for his coming. That is the first fact: disciples are sent to prepare the way for the Lord.

The fact that Jesus sends out 72 perhaps implies that Jesus sends out all his disciples – we are all meant to go out as missionaries. This is not an option but a basic understanding of being a disciple. We are all to be missionaries.

Secondly we are sent to proclaim the Kingdom of God. Jesus came to initiate the reign of God here in this world, right here and now. He described the Kingdom of God as the peace, joy and justice of the Holy Spirit. Peace and joy are not just passing emotions, but ways of being, gifts of the Spirit. They are our legacy as followers of Jesus.

Justice is a right relationship with God, all others, our selves and all of creation. There should be no one in the world that I have not forgiven. There should be no one in the world of whom I have not asked for forgiveness if need be. When we are reconciled and in a harmonious relationship with all of God's creation, then the Kingdom of God has begun here on earth. Our task as missionaries is to live in the Kingdom of God, and to proclaim that Kingdom by our very lives.

Recently the Church celebrated the 50th anniversary of the founding of Fidei Donum priests. This movement was a response to the encyclical by that name written out of concern for the growth of the church in Africa. This document gave birth to a variety of missionary initiatives, including one that sent diocesan priests to other countries for a period of time.

Some of the speakers at this conference stressed the key points of mission as it is understood in the Church today: everyone is a missionary by baptism; every priest is ordained for the world, not just one diocese; every parish is missionary and mission is of the essence of the Church are but some of the teachings of this conference.

Bishop Fred Grecco of Toronto shared his experience of attending the charismatic conference in that city called *Lift Jesus Higher*. Most of the participants were there for the first time. When he asked one of the organizers how that came about, he was told that some years back they realized that their annual conference was made up of the same people year after year. They reflected on that fact and realized that was not good, so they asked each person there to bring along a new person the next year, and that transformed the gathering. They became more missionary, reaching out to the unchurched and the unbelievers. They were evangelizing.

What about us? Mission for us means starting right here, right now, at home, school, office or workplace. We are all to proclaim and help realize the Kingdom of God in our own environment. Let us make this a resolution that we will carry out.

The Eucharist we celebrate today ends in Latin with the words *Ite missa est* which means *Go the Mass is Ended*. We don't just leave the Church, we are sent out, mandated to go out and be bread that is broken for the world.

So, be a missionary - Proclaim the kingdom of God as a missionary Church