

+ J. M. J.

I had heard it said many times before becoming a priest that a priest never knows what a day will hold. Each day is different filled with graces and challenges as a priest is called in one of many different directions that he could not have foreseen as he awoke that morning. I personally have become more cognizant of that recently in the mornings as I prepare for the day and ask God for the strength to do whatever is asked of me.

Jesus sends these seventy-two out to minister in his name. God in his divine providence willed that we would be saved through his Son's humanity and subsequently generation upon generation would have the saving message of Jesus preached to them through human beings. ~~I reflect on that today calling to mind some events that happened this week.~~

Comment [DC1]: Amazing he uses us

Jesus tells the seventy-two to proclaim "The kingdom of God is at hand." Consider the role of the priest, one of those sent out today. His primary duty of a priest is then to proclaim the Gospel of God. This is done through homily preparation, meeting with people who come with various problems or just to talk to Father either scheduled or unscheduled. A priest proclaims the Gospel when he visits the classroom and is present to the children. During a week a priest will anoint the sick and is often called unexpectedly. He also heals through the sacrament of reconciliation, by praying with people, or by helping someone be healed through the annulment process. He baptizes, prepares for couples for marriages, and reassures the hope we have in the resurrection at funerals. And then he intercedes in prayer for his flock in the bit things and in the small.

When Jesus sends out these seventy-two he tells them "Carry no money bag, no sack." St. Augustine in a sermon examined what does this mean, for Jesus carried a money bag; we recall he entrusted it to Judas (John 12:6). He interprets the money bag or the sack symbolically to be wisdom. A minister of Christ does not carry around his own wisdom. We quickly realize that nobody wants our wisdom; it isn't so

particularly wise anyways. Those who minister in the name of Jesus do so only when they give the wisdom, the gift of the Holy Spirit.

That Jesus sends out these seventy-two implies there is a call, an acceptance by a person that he is going to accept the grace of the Holy Spirit and reap the Lord's harvest. Last week when I attended the Men's Conference there were hundreds of men lined up to go to the sacrament of reconciliation. There were only eight or so priests to hear those confessions. In April the archdiocese published some statistics on the age of its priests. There are forty-seven priests under the age of forty, the group I fit into. There are seventy-five priests in their eighties, the Msgr. Baldwins, Monticellos and Fr. O'Deys. There are one hundred twenty-six priests in their seventies. You can imagine in only a few years a great number of priests will no longer be physically able to minister and we will need a great outpouring of young men to take their place. The ideal our Savior tells us is to be sent out in pairs; this is becoming increasingly more difficult with our current numbers.

1. But the Lord offers us the solution. He tells us to pray that the master of the harvest will send out laborers for his harvest. It is a reminder for us to be praying for vocations in our public prayer, in our prayer as a family, and in our private prayer. We should be offering up our sacrifices and daily sufferings so that we may have vocations. We should be fasting whether it be from food or something we enjoy that the Church may have more priests. We might even consider stopping by the church when we have the chance to pray in front of our Lord begging for more vocations. Do we fulfill the Jesus' command of us to ask for more laborers?
2. As Fr. Mark has said repeatedly, in a parish the size of Our Lady of Sorrows, we should have several vocations, several people studying at Sacred Heart Major Seminary for the priesthood or the diaconate or some other ministry within the Church. In the Gospel the Lord says "I am sending you." We were all baptized priest, prophet, and king. The bishops and theologians of

the Second Vatican Council reminded us we all share in our Lord's sending out of the seventy-two. If the only thing we do related to church is come to Mass once per week I dare say the Lord is asking you for more.

So pray & listen. For those who might even have the slightest urge that God is calling them to be a priest, a sister, or a deacon. Let me say, it is the greatest life. It is a freeing. It is joy-filled. It is absolutely wonderful to walk around without money bag or sack yet give the wisdom of the Holy Spirit and preach the Gospel and see lives changed miraculously. The greatest joy in life is to see the Lord's work done firsthand. **"The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few; so ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest."**