



July 15, 2012
Fifteenth Sunday of Ordinary Time

"Jesus summoned the Twelve and began to send them out two by two and gave them authority over unclean spirits"—Mark 6:7

Dear Friends;

I was around nine years old the first time my mother sent me to the store to get something she needed. I was so excited because I got to ride my new bike two blocks to the grocery store. My mother gave me the list, money and instructions on getting back the correct change. I felt important because I was contributing in a meaningful way to our family.

In Mark's Gospel Jesus is doing what my mother did. He is equipping and sending his disciples to share in his work of proclaiming the reign of God. He is calling them to be other Christs. They become him when they do as he does.

There are two interesting things to note in this passage. First he calls twelve. This is a prophetic gesture. The number twelve recalls the twelve sons of Jacob who were the Patriarchs of the Twelve Tribes of the people of Israel. From what we know of Jesus' time, first century Jews considered only the tribes of Judah and Benjamin to be worthy of God's concern. The other ten tribes had been conquered and disappeared hundreds of years before. By choosing and commissioning the Twelve Jesus is saying that the reign of God is not exclusive but inclusive. All are invited.

The other thing that Jesus does is he gives them authority over the evil spirits. In the Gospel of Mark, the first miracle that Jesus works is to cure a man afflicted with a demon. This miracle announces the purpose of Jesus mission—to overcome the force of evil in our world.

The demon-possessed whom Jesus healed were not just mentally ill. They were starving people, victims of social violence and helpless against their abuse. By liberating the demon-possessed Jesus was building a new Israel made up of freer more independent people. He was building a new society. This is why his adversaries saw his exorcisms as threatening. People were being freed from their dependence on oppressive social structures. His healings were signs of God's coming new world.

And now Jesus sends the Twelve Apostles to do the same. The word apostle means 'one who has been sent.' Christ has entrusted his followers with the mission of overcoming evil and proclaiming the Good News of God's coming reign of compassion and love.

By our baptism we are all sent on the same mission as the Twelve. What are the evils we must overcome in the world? Who are the people we must set free? Who do we need to invite to join us in our communion of life and love?

In a world filled with catastrophic pessimism Jesus dares to bring hope. Jesus saw his healings as signs of a new world. God is here. We are not alone. We can alleviate suffering with compassion. If we are serious about knowing Jesus we must do as he did. He has given us instruction and gifted us with the Holy Spirit. He sends us off on mission to proclaim God's liberating love for all. How can we refuse?

Peace,

Fr. Ron