

15th Sunday OT – Mark 6:7-13

Jesus gives them a list of what they were not to take. They were to be like him in carrying almost nothing. He allowed them a staff for the road and a pair of sandals. Heading the list of forbidden baggage is **bread**. (This may be significant!) The section of Mark that we are beginning is often known as the bread section because of the number of times the word *bread* is mentioned. Mark may be hinting at the Eucharist, a doctrine easily misunderstood by outsiders. Missionaries of Mark's own time would reflect that though they lacked often *material bread and resources*, they had with them *the Eucharistic presence of their Lord*.

In *Give Us This Day* reflection Heidi Cerneka, a Maryknoll Lay Missioner, writes, "...often when I asked what had led them to be *pastoral visitors*, they would say, "I want to bring Jesus to the prisoners." But honestly, Jesus was there long before us. Our mission is not to bring Jesus, but to go out and meet him in our neighbor." That is why when the mass is ended we go out to meet Jesus in others with the presence of the Eucharistic Lord within us. We don't have to say or do anything special, and sometimes being present is enough.

When I visit the folks down the street each week at Margaret Hall I usually like to accompany Mark, who is the lay chaplain and spiritual coordinator. He distributes the Eucharist several times a week and I accompany him once a week to anoint the new people. With this simple ritual, there isn't much time to chat. On a few second visits we chat for a while before Mark gives them communion. I can tell they are happy to see us, but bringing communion, there is a special joy for some.

Heidi writes, "...what does this gospel ask of me? What are my security blankets today that Jesus calls me to leave at home or to not be distracted by? Things I might use to buffer me from direct contact with others or that get in the way of my truly connecting with people...How can I disarm myself so that, as in the gospel, I can truly approach others and be unencumbered enough to accept their hospitality, to meet people where they are so as to walk with them?" We really don't need any special training except for whatever keeps us from being ourselves.

The gospel reminds us that we don't have to do it alone. Find a companion, since Jesus did send them in pairs, two by two. Also, be ready for rejections, and big time. How many times have you sent away those pesky Jehovah Witnesses? We Catholics are smart, though, since we go to the hospitals and

rest homes where it is harder to escape us. But really, do we need to go anywhere? Nowadays our biggest ministry can be to our own families. Through prayer and witness there will be a time when they will be coming to us.

We have our family gathering of just us siblings at the Lake next week. It is a great opportunity for us to support one another and to see where we are in our lives, especially spiritually. My two older sisters' husbands have both died in just the past few months. My older brother still has health issues, but we hope he can come. It's the next generation we are all concerned about, the children and grandchildren and great grandchildren.

I am convinced that these next generations do not need people to preach dogma or the gospels to them, but to see them lived through example. As Saint Francis reminded his friars, "Teach the gospels, and when necessary use words." Teach the gospels by living them, otherwise they are just words on paper without life. Our generation continues to have a unique opportunity to model the gospels for them. What a great parish we have for them to find out how that is done, and not just through our programs but in our faith community.

Jesus used parables about nature, like the mustard seed and the birds and the flowers in the field. It is also not surprising that Saint Francis preached to the birds and tamed the wild wolf terrorizing the city of Bobbio in Italy. Saint Anthony was said to preach to fish of the sea where they gathered at the shore to listen to him. (I didn't know fish had ears!) We have some eagles and osprey attend mass on Sunday mornings here. I used to tease the folks at the lake that they were gathered to hear the word too.

We have our own St. Francis, Bro. Bob, who feeds the birds outside our back door. I used to think that he was really feeding the sparrow hawks, until he started scattering the bird seed under the bushes for their own protection.

We celebrate our other Bro. Bob Politi today for the seed that he has scattered over the years here at St. Francis de Sales and fed us by his quiet work for the parish in the background as our sacristan and liturgy coordinator. May they both continue to be examples for us in our faith community.