

A New Level of Discourse

Jesus sends his 72 disciples out to preach the Gospel, and they come back rejoicing at the success of their mission. After He appointed them. He said: "The harvest is abundant, but the laborers are few so ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest."

Who are the laborers that our Lord speaks of? Perhaps it is the clergy and religious who first come to mind. And we certainly have a duty to pray for an increase in vocations to the priesthood and religious life. But we, confirmed Catholics, are also His laborers. We are called by Christ to bring others to Him and to join us in the life of being a Christian, and to a life of active discipleship.

A couple of months ago the National Football League held its annual draft of college talent. The very last person drafted, won an award called: "Mr. Irrelevant". On God's team, there is no one who is considered irrelevant.

We are Jesus' coworkers, His fellow laborers. We are players on His team. And on His team, there are no bench-warmers. The more actively we take up our mission to spread Christ's Kingdom with our words, our prayers, and our example of Christian living, the more we will share in Christ's joy.

What can we expect and How are we to do this?

Like the 72, we are called to bring **a whole new level of discourse** into our community, into our family, into our prayer group, into our coffee group, a whole new message. In Jesus' time, the hot issues were: who is Rome occupying now, what is Pontius Pilot doing, are my taxes going to go up, will my kid get his act together and move out of the house, my parents are so sick I do not know what to do.?

The 72 were bringing a message that was different. They brought a new message of who is about to come into their town, into their life, a message of who is going to fill them with wonder with his healing and with his words, who will forgive them their sins. This is all new for towns and the villages. Shocking really, Front page stuff, above the fold!

And of course, the 72 were not talking about some person whom they had read about or heard about on the street or on Facebook; they are talking about their friend whom they had a personal relationship with, whom they had come to know and how He had changed their life. They are talking about the person who IS the Son of God, the Messiah.

Could we do this? Could we be one of the 72? How could we ever do this? We are to go first to God, in prayer. Inviting people into the Kingdom of Christ is, above all, a spiritual endeavor so our Lord reminds us to seek God's wisdom before approaching others. The harvest, after all, belongs to Him. We simply have the privilege of helping with the harvesting. It is God Himself who must be at work in us as we call others to the Christian life.

If we courageously go out as Christ's ambassadors, we will come back "rejoicing", just like the 72 disciples.

Before the rejoicing, along the way, we must deal with the culture of today. Our culture today, in many ways, is equally hostile to Christ and the Christian way of life. When we try to live

out Christ's teachings, defend our faith, and build up the Church, we often run into resistance, mockery, and humiliation. Jesus knew we would; but he wants us to be his courageous ambassadors anyway. He told us that we will sometimes be rejected because of our faith. And that's OK. He was, too. We just shake the dust from our feet and move on, trusting that He can turn failures into successes.

This is the secret to dealing with discouragement. Discouragement, one of the Christian disciple's greatest enemies. When we try to follow Christ conscientiously, and obstacles spring up, and failures plague us, the first temptation we face is discouragement. We think we have done something wrong. We think we are not worthy. We think Jesus is disappointed with us.

When we let these evil thoughts take root in our hearts, they stifle us. They make us settle for comfortable mediocrity. The devil loves that. He loves filling Christian hearts with paralyzing discouragement.

Christ has now reminded us of the expectations we should have as we strive to follow Him. We should expect rejection, persecution, and obstacles. Now that we know this, we don't have to be discouraged anymore. We can be humble, trust in Christ, wipe the dust from our feet, and move forward.

By virtue of our Confirmation we are called to be laborers in the vineyard. By virtue of seeking God's wisdom in prayer as the laborers, and by knowing that the discouragement is possible in our endeavors, we pack all that up, grow stronger knowing that it is His strength, His presence and His grace that makes it possible for us to undertake this mission.

It can be as easy as bringing a housewarming gift to a new neighbor, or as demanding as visiting prisoners, finding shelter for single mothers, or inviting an agnostic to come to Church. As one of the 72, It can entail sharing your experience with Jesus in your life.

As we prepare to receive Jesus in the Eucharist, let us ask the Holy Spirit to enlighten our minds, so that each one of us can make an honest evaluation of our own intentional discipleship.