

Let me see if I got that right: “Jesus summoned the Twelve and began to send them out two by two...He instructed them to take nothing for the journey but a walking stick—no food, no sack, no money in their belts.

They were, however, to wear sandals but not a second tunic.”

I wonder what Jesus would say to me if I told him that only two weeks after sending me to Christ the King the parish has painted the walls in my room, purchased a new fan, new sheets and towels, a new bathroom mirror, and even a toilet seat cover, and that they’re replacing the carpets in my room and looking to get new furniture.

And also...a week ago I went to the Honda dealership in Concord and purchased a new 2018 Civic.

What do you think He would say?! Well, you know, one of the reasons why He was sending his disciples out with so few possessions was because He wanted them to be able to move quickly from town to town, and my new Civic is a turbo, so...I think He would be okay with that. Right?

But the other reason - the main reason - why He sent them out with nothing is because He was teaching them that they already had everything. They had Him.

Even if He wasn’t with them physically, He was with them spiritually - interiorly - guiding them, providing for them, and enabling them to do those wonderful things we just read about.

With Jesus working through them, the apostles were able to drive out demons and cure the sick, and yet, this mission was not entirely for the benefit others; in truth, it was really for the benefit of the apostles themselves.

Jesus sends them out empty-handed so that they can come to know and believe that He is the messiah - that he is God - and that He does extraordinary things for those who have faith in him. If Jesus sends out the apostles with all the supplies they need, they might be tempted to take the credit for themselves for the works they did.

But having been sent with nothing, they are confronted with the reality that their master is different. He has a certain power and authority to change the lives of the people who encounter Him, or who encounter his disciples, with whom he has chosen to share this power.

That’s why as the apostles go forth, they not only drive out demons and cure the sick, but they also preach repentance.

And what is that? I think most of us hear that word and cringe a little.

Repentance. It has a connotation of blame, doesn’t it? And shame. “Repent! Because you messed up and God is angry with you now.” Right?

Well, that’s not what repentance means. Repentance comes from a Greek word: metanoia, which means to go beyond (meta) the mind (noia), which for us Christians means to go beyond the worldly way of thinking that so many people have fallen into, that I often fall into; the way of thinking that places myself before others; that makes God out to be a sort of tyrant who inhibits my freedom, or who is distant, aloof, or what’s worse, that He doesn’t exist at all.

Repentance is to go beyond this mind, and to experience a change, where your life and my life and fundamentally turned - converted - away from selfishness, pride, and sin – toward love, humility, and grace.

It is to follow the words of St. Paul who said, “put away the old self of your former way of life, corrupted through deceitful desires, and be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and put on the new self, created in God’s way in righteousness and holiness of truth” (Eph 4:22-24)

Repentance is not simply an admission of faults; it is accepting a new self, a new identity, in which, we can, again say with St. Paul: “it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me” (Gal 2:20).

That’s why Christ sent the apostles on a mission to drive out demons and to cure the sick, because that’s what He himself did; that was part of His mission.

By inviting the apostles into His work, Jesus was really inviting them into his life, his existence, his identity. That's what the second reading from Ephesians is all about:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavens, as he chose us in him, before the foundation of the world, to be holy and without blemish before him...In him you also, who have heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and have believed in him, were sealed with the promised holy Spirit, which is the first installment of our inheritance toward redemption as God's possession, to the praise of his glory" (Eph 1:3-4; 13-14)

We are God's possession, St. Paul says. We have been chosen by God, adopted by Him, who lavishes his grace upon us in order to make us like him, to make us holy, and give us the authority to go out and to share this good news with others.

That's why I love the crucifix here, Christ crucified in priestly vestments, because it is a reminder to me of the mission and authority he has given me in sending me to you.

My mission, and Father (celebrant's) mission as your priest is to serve you, to lay down my life [our lives] for you here, as Christ did on the cross, so that you can carry out your mission and exercise your authority out there, because you have been given the authority and the mission to transform the world, by bringing Christ into your work your homes, your friends' homes, even into the grocery store.

But you can only do this if you've gone through that conversion, that metanoia, which is nothing to be afraid of, but is really an adventure of great joy.

And so, I'd like to exercise my authority and mission now, by teaching you something that I believe will help you in your metanoia and mission.

Out of my seven years in the seminary, I don't think I ever learned anything as important as this, and it's not something I can tell you, but is something that I must show you

(At this point, Fr. Mario knelt down before the altar and placed his head to the ground.)

From that place, from the posture, I have come to know truth. The truth of who I am: my brokenness and insufficiency, and how little I possess of my own which is of any worth to God, much like the apostles.

And yet, precisely from that place I also have come to know the truth that Christ lives in me, because from that place He has invited me to imitate Him, who in His humility so loved the world and poured himself out to save us and summon us to Himself.

If you learn this - in some shape or form - if you make it your own (and maybe you already have), you're on your way to metanoia, to imitating Christ and to discovering the new life He has in store for you, a life of real peace and freedom, even it means being sent out into a hostile world with what seems like nothing.

But we know that we have been given everything that we need, and that there is nothing to fear. On the altar, in the tabernacle, living within us, we have everything.