

October 3: Jesus' Guidelines for Mission

Our beautiful Gospel today narrates Jesus' choice of seventy-two followers and sends them out on mission. Thus, we should conclude that mission is for *all* of Jesus' disciples—*all* baptized Christians, not just the religious or ordained. Everyone, particularly parents and even grandparents, has a great mission to fulfill! Note that mission begins with God's initiative, with Jesus' choice. We do not engage in mission based on our decision; "You did not choose me, no, I chose you; and I commissioned you to go out and bear fruit, fruit that will last" (Jn 15:16).

Recall that "the harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few." This was true in Jesus' time and remains true today. We must recognize the great task that faces us as Christians in the world; we turn to the Lord in prayer, asking for additional harvesters. Then, Jesus gives a brief, yet direct instruction: "Be on your way." Do *not* delay! Go, and go now!

Remember that you will face many challenges; you will be like lambs in the midst of wolves. Recognize that some people will welcome your message, while others will reject both you and your very mission. Jesus advises his missionaries to "travel light." Don't let material "stuff" weigh you down and get in the way of your ministry of preaching Jesus' Good News.

The missioner is to extend peace to everyone; in other words, the Christian message is one of "mercy and compassion" (theme of Pope Francis' 2015 visit to the Philippines). In addition, recall Pope Francis' advice to go to the margins, the peripheries, to the excluded in society. Make the announcement of Jesus' *Kingdom message* your central emphasis; proclaim that "the reign of God is near." Indeed, as Christians we *all* are to carry on the mission task that Jesus gave us; we are *joyful heralds* of Christ's Good News!