

Proclamation of the Gospel

The Lord be with you.
And with your Spirit.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to St. Mark.
Glory to You, O Lord.

Jesus summoned the Twelve and began to send them out two by two and gave them authority over unclean spirits. 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.

He said to them, “Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave. Whatever place does not welcome you or listen to you, leave there and shake the dust off your feet in testimony against them.” So they went off and preached repentance. The Twelve drove out many demons, and they anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them.

The Gospel of the Lord.
Praise to You, Lord Jesus Christ.

Homily by Fr. Gerry Hurley

So what’s in your wallet? Isn’t that the commercial? And the answer or the assumed correct answer is : The Capitol One card. Now in truth there are many other cards that I think provide just about the same services..... However these are the ones that have capitalized on this expression.

You may ask : what does this have to do with the Gospel?
Here is my connection, Jesus is sending out the Apostles, on their mission, just as He sent them so He sends us ! There comes a time in the proclamation of the gospel when everyoneeveryonehas to go outyes go out and preach proclaim the Kingdom of God. Going means essentially stretching to proclaim the Gospel message of Jesus Christ to others.

First He sends the 12, then it is the 72, then it is everyone else that would be a disciple. One cannot be a disciple of Jesus without going out. For the Spirit of God is not given us for our own selves or our own purposes but for the formation of other disciples and the building up of His Kingdom.

So let’s take a look at His instructions to them as He sent them out :
“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.”

The issue : Trust Me I've got you covered. Full trust in me because I know your every need. Now how much heed our brothers gave to that advice is theoretical. We don't have any account. We know he sent them in Pairs because He understood the obstacles, the difficulties, and the resistance to the proclamation of the Gospel. "Be cunning as serpents and gentle as Dove's"

I have read this passage so many times over the years, and yet while I have seen the guidelines every time, I have never been drawn to them as I have been recently. How striking those little simple details..... how important. I have read this reading on 4 different occasions recently and not for preparing this homily..... I read Matthew's parallel passage 3 times.

At our Staff meeting on Tuesday morning we read this same reading as our Lectio Divina reflection, where you are asked to listen carefully and see & hear what "word or words" the Lord is giving you, and what is He teaching you through that word or words. I was amazed at the word He gave me just stunned to be honest there were other words I would have liked to choosecast my eyes over many other words.... Apostles, The Twelve, in pairs, but none of those were the word he gave me ! The word he gave me was "Sack"..... I sat there quietly reflecting on this word "Sack" throughout these four prayer periods of Lectio. First thing I thought of was my school sack (Is that what you call it here ?) It was leather 2 straps that came across the front and they hooked here in the middle ! In the rain we had a little cover to go over it, and if you lost that you used a "Roches Stores" (Like Walmart) plastic bag.

As the prayer sessions went on ... #1 #2 #3 #4 Yes I could see more and more clearly why He gave me that word. Don't carry any "Sack" anybody understand why He directed them to carry no sack ? Do you carry a Sack on your journey ? How many people carry a sack ? There's the one we strap on our back, there's the one we use to carry our stuff, a computer sack, a clothes sack, watch people boarding an airplane very few are not carrying a sack. But ironically I believe that Jesus wasn't directing the disciples about any of those Sacks !

I came to see in that prayer period the "Sack" that Jesus was talking about The Sack of Life yes the sack that nobody sees but you and He. Jesus knew full well that His disciples were carrying a sack It's a very unseen sack It's a sack that has a whole lot to do with the Heart ... where we really work out our relationship with Him. Some people empty that sack periodically, but yet continue to carry that sack. It is amazing how we end up carrying the same stuff over and over again, despite our attempts to empty it out. In my own life I have had a few marvelous opportunities to empty that sack. And yet after emptying every thing out I have insisted on putting some of those very same things back into my Sack why is that ? Is it Fear ... anger... stress..... is it a lack of trust ? Why can I not let go of these things that make my sack so hard to carry sometimes ? Why do I not let go of these things ? So it's not really a question "What you got in your wallet?" It is a question "What you got in your Sack ?"

The stuff in my sack has become a little different over the years but sadly not immensely different ? If I really want to change the look of things in my Sack then I need to get serious about some of these issues !

Let me give you a look inside my sack. I'm not proud of it, but I've had nice opportunities over the years to address or change some of it. I'm amazed that I still wind up with some of the same things.

- Carelessness: Carelessness in regard to Him and relationship with Him. How important is that relationship? I say it's important. How do I give witness to that?
- Untruth (lies): Where do they find space? Why?
- Truth: That's a good one. Seeking that truth.
- Resentment: What are the resentments that I hold on to?
- Purpose: Do I have a purpose?
- Here's a good one — It seems to be kind of the global addiction — It's called gossip (half-truths): Do we have a kind of an addiction to that reality? Oh I certainly think we do. Why is it? Is it fear? Is it a lack of trust? Is it stress, anxiety? Why is it? It just seems to be the recurrent mantra among us.
- Genuineness: That's a nice value. One of the nicest things you could say about a person, probably — They're genuine.
- This is an interesting one — blaming (scapegoating): How come it's rarely me? It's always out there? How come it so often somebody else that I cannot take personal responsibility? Well you know, it's because of this, and because of the history of my life, and because of the memories, and because I was wounded when I was seven or eight. It's amazing.
- Unforgiveness: What a struggle that one is! Who are the people that are still unforgiven? And I carry the burden of that. Each one of us carries the burden of that ourselves — the areas of unforgiveness. Sorta like I drank the poison and hope the other person will die, really. And I keep feeding it. Unless I change the pattern, is there going to be any improvement?
- Selfishness: About me. I am the object. Yes, I am the object of His love. But if I took that seriously, man it would diminish a whole lot of these other issues.
- Hostility: Where does my hostility show up? Why does it show up? And how is it related to all of those other events going back there? Because I was hostile early on when I was 11. And then I continue the pattern and never broke it.
- Forgiveness: that's a good one. It can bring a whole lot of healing.
- Envy: Who am I envious of? Am I envious of God? That's good question. I would say no, I couldn't possibly be envious of God. Of course I could! He's so important. It's the important people that I'm envious of. The others, not that's critical.
- Unselfish: What a nice gift. To be unselfish, to be genuinely unselfish.

What are some other ones that I don't have in their? There are many others. So what you got in your Sack ??? Do you want to rid yourself of any of it ? What are you actively doing about it? Why do you go back to this? I think it's easy to see why He said folks, don't carry a sack. Because you know what? It becomes that storage place for all of my hurts, all of my disappointments, all of my regrets, and all of my struggle. He said I know your challenges even before you even make them. But it is just amazing. I know in my own life, I found I have had some marvelous opportunities to just dump these out and get rid of them.

I was remembering and sharing with the staff during the week, you know when I was halfway through my seminary training I was in my fourth year coming up to the end of that summer in August. I was trying to decide whether I wanted to stay in my home diocese which I was signed up for at the time. When I shared it though, my Bishop was not very happy that I was thinking of going to Mississippi. He said I wouldn't advise anyone to go that far away. The general small cultural perspective, and so I decided to make a little retreat. I said I'll go to the Benedictines, they weren't too far from my father's homeplace.

So I went to the Benedictines to spend three days and was amazed by these folks. I learned a lot about the Benedictines. They are the ones who lived the strict rigid rule of the Benedictine order and then there's the Benedictine foundation which is slightly different there more lax in the application of the regulation of the rule of St. Benedict. But these guys were pretty amazing. I learned during those three days as I met these guys that they were all extroverts. I had in my mind they would all be introverted. Only praying and austere every day. But, man I loved these guys. I felt that I could stay there longer. And actually I called home and I told my brothers and sisters I was going to stay on to the end of the week — another four days. Which I did. And it was extremely helpful. I remember that sense of emptying out my second sack. I asked the Lord what in the world of my supposed to do? Then, I came back to seminary and I signed up for the diocese of Natchez/Jackson. As I began to look in my sack, I said oh man, I'll be darn if I didn't have some of that same old crap in there again, you know.

I think I understand why He said don't take a sack. Because as I look at my sack, it doesn't have that much treasure. There are great treasures in my life. Man, I'm intensely blessed. What tends to dominate in the sack is really important. Is that gonna get me very far along in the proclamation of the Gospel? The question is not what's in your wallet. That'll get you places in the world. What's in your sack? And how does it inhibit and disrupt and get in the way of your mission? Your need to be a proclaimer of the Gospel? It is an amazing word — sack — everybody has one. What you got in yours? And what are you doing about changing it?