

Reflection for the 15th Sunday of Ordinary Time

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. Mark 6:8-9

Today on this 15th Sunday of Ordinary Time we have a Gospel reading taken from the Gospel of Mark in which we hear of Jesus sending out his 12 Apostles on a mission to share the Good News. Jesus instructs them on what to take, where to stay and what to do. Reflecting on this journey that Jesus sends the 12 Apostles on, I could not help but think of the different ways my Dad and Uncle would prepare for a trip. Both of them would only take one carry-on size luggage with them for a trip no matter if the trip was days or weeks long. But they both had a very different way of packing their luggage. My Dad, days before the trip would make sure the cloths that he was taking were cleaned and pressed and he would make sure that down to the smallest item he had everything needed for the trip. The night before the trip my Dad would lay everything out that he was taking and then after one final inspection he would pack his luggage for the trip. My Uncle had a rather different approach to packing, he did it the day he was leaving and normally it was the last thing he did before he went on a trip. Normally when my uncle would visit my family, he was always borrowing something from my Dad that he forgot to pack.

The Gospel reading this Sunday at first glance seems to support my Dad's way of packing. As Jesus sends out the 12 for their mission work, He is very deliberate and careful in how He sends them out. He informs them of what to take and what not to take, where to stay, and what to do. Considering the importance of the mission it makes sense that Jesus would give specific instructions. One can see a message in what Jesus informs the Apostles to take and not to take, yes to what will help in the immediate moment of the journey. But Jesus seems to be informing His Apostles not to worry about items that are about the sustainability of the mission, God will provide for that.

Looking at the different Greek verbs that are used in the sending forth of the Apostles in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke we can get a better understanding of the message contained within these three readings. The fact that Mark uses the Greek verb "*airo*" which is to take, when Matthew and Luke use the Greek verb "*ktethe*" which is translated as to acquire, confirms the idea that Jesus is sending His Apostles on their journey knowing that what they do not have will be provided for them. So yes, we should be like my Dad getting ready what we need for the journey, but we should also be like my uncle knowing that if you do not have what we need it will be provided on the journey.

When first looking at the three Gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke which all mention the sending forth of the 12 it is easy to see a profound difference between Mark, that mentions taking a walking stick and sandals and the other two that do not mention taking a walking stick and sandals. But when we see the original Greek words that are used, we can see that all three Gospels that mention the sending forth of the 12 are presenting the same message that we take what we have, and God will provide what we do not have. These three Gospel readings are reminding us that as we go forth and share the Good News, we must be willing to go forth using what we have, to make a difference in the world knowing that God will provide what we do not have.