

## Reflection for the 14<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Ordinary Time

*Let the Peace of Christ control your hearts, let the word of Christ dwell in you richly (Col 3:15a, 16a)*

The Gospel reading this Sunday mentions the 72 disciples that Jesus appoints and sent ahead of him in pairs to every town and place he intended to visit. Before the 72 were sent out by Jesus, He had already sent out the 12 Apostles. It is only in the Gospel of Luke that we hear of the 72 being sent by Jesus. But in all four of the Gospel readings, we hear of the 12 being sent. This fact can bring up the question of Luke having a message or reason for mentioning the 72 being sent forth. We can connect the 72 disciples with the 70 prophets found in the Book of Numbers, 11:16-29. God sent the spirit on 70 elders to help Moses take care of the Israelites and Jesus sent forth the 72 to the towns that he intended to visit.

At this point it might be helpful to address the elephant that is in the room. In our Gospel Reading today we hear of Jesus sending out 72 disciples and Moses receives 70 elders. 72 and 70 are close but most people would think that they are not close enough. Would it help to point out that 70 disciples is in some manuscripts such as the Codex Sinaiticus and the Caesarean text. Seventy-two is in most Alexandrian and Western texts. In translating into Vulgate, St. Jerome selected the reading of 72 disciples. Today most Protestant Bibles list 70 disciples and most Catholic Bibles list 72. If we look for a list of the 70 or 72 disciples, we can find a list that is claimed to be created by St. Hippolytus, a martyr for the faith who at one point was in conflict with the Bishop of Rome and set himself up as an Anti-Pope, he reconciled with the Church before he gave his life for the faith. St. Hippolytus lived from 170 AD to 235 AD, his list of the disciples that Jesus sent out in pairs only contains 70 names. Knowing that throughout the ages there has been a question if Jesus sent out 70 or 72 disciples, and that we can find Catholic Bibles that list the number as 70 or 72 I think it is safe for us to ponder a connection and meaning with the disciples that Jesus sent out ahead of him and the elders that God called forth to help Moses.

From the example of looking at 70 elders in the Book of Numbers and the 70 or 72 disciples in the Gospel of Luke, we can see the Book of Numbers foreshadowing what is to come. The similarities between Numbers 11:16-29 and Luke 10:1-12, can be seen as a confirmation that Jesus is the Son of God that he is the new Moses that has come to free His people from slavery to sin. In looking at the life of Moses and the life of Jesus Christ one can find several similarities. Both Moses and Jesus are saved from certain death as infants. We read in Exodus 1:22 – 2:10 that the Pharaoh in Egypt had commanded that all males born to Hebrew women were to be thrown into the river. It was at this time that a Levite woman who conceived and bore a son, placed him in a basket and put the basket in the river, the Pharaoh's daughter found the basket and adopted the child as her son calling him Moses for, she had drawn him from the water. In the Gospel of Matthew 2:13-23 we hear of King Herod discovering that he was tricked by the Magi became furious and orders the massacre of all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity two years old and under. Before this happens the angel of the Lord had appeared to Joseph in a dream and informed him to take the child and mother, fleeing to Egypt.

As people of faith, we can see the events of the Old Testament preparing God's people for what is to come in the New Testament. The Old Covenant prepares God's chosen people for the New Covenant. We can see a similar progression in our individual lives, one's childhood prepares a person for adolescence, which prepares the individual for adulthood, and this time of life prepares us for our final journey from this world to the next. Just like the three Sacraments of Initiation, Baptism, Holy Eucharist, and Confirmation, each builds on the next. Once all three Sacraments of Initiation are received by a member of the Church, the person is now a full member of the Mystical Body of Christ, the Church. What we can see is the sending forth of the Disciples and the sending of the Holy Spirit on the Elders is that our loving God is always calling us to grow and become the people He has created us to be. It is also important of note that our God chooses to build upon what is already there.