

ORDINARY SUNDAY XIV "C"
July 6/7, 2019

Today's scriptures center on the campaign. No, not *those* campaigns! But, a campaign nonetheless. The campaign arising out of our baptism, confirmation; the campaign to which we are sent at the end of each Mass—the campaign of continuing the building of the Kingdom of God begun in Jesus.

Like the political campaigns blanketing our state which send out "advance teams" of workers to prepare for the arrival of their presidential candidate, so too, in today's Gospel Jesus sends out an "advance team" of 72 missionaries in addition to the twelve disciples to prepare the villages and towns he would be passing through on his way to the climactic event of his mission—his death and resurrection in Jerusalem which would unleash the Holy Spirit into the hearts and lives of his followers and bring the Church to birth firmly establishing the Kingdom of God within human history. I suggest three points for reflection.

First, in carrying out the campaign of establishing the Kingdom of God which he received from the Father, Jesus was not a "lone ranger." While he could have fulfilled all that the Father asked of him, he chooses not fulfill his mission alone. Just as the "yes" of Mary which brought about the union of God's divinity with our humanity in the human birth of Jesus, which reversed the original no of the sin of Adam and Eve to be co-workers of God in God's plan for his creation, so Jesus deliberately chooses to involve his disciples, and today us, in his mission.

Second, who are these 72 disciples and who do they represent? If the Twelve are the Apostles, and prefigure the Bishops, their successors with the ordained priests and deacons their established helpers, these 72 represent other ministers in the Church, each of us united in our common baptism. Here first place is assigned to parents who, as the Rite of Baptism teaches, are the "primary educators of their children in the ways of faith." Parents example of prayer, of living an active Catholic life of witness, moral integrity, and of service in the example of Jesus is the school of discipleship for which no parish or school program no matter how well organized, staffed or funded can replace. Next are catechists, who engage in various parish ministries of

faith formation for adults and children: Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, our day school and after school religious formation programs, sacramental preparation programs. Liturgical ministers: readers, musicians, extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, Homebound Ministers. Christian service ministers: Stephen Ministers, Bereavement Ministers, Marriage and Family Life Ministers, the many among us actively involved in the groups and outreach services supported by our Social Justice Committee. Our parish and community are rich and enriched by all who choose to take up the challenge of baptism, confirmation and the Eucharist and go out as missionaries.

In his first encyclical letter as Pope, *The Light of Faith*, co-written with Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, Pope Francis reminds us of the missionary charge given to us by Jesus through baptism, confirmation and each Eucharist as “campaign workers”: *“Those who have opened their hearts to God’s love, heard his voice and received his light, cannot keep this gift to themselves. ...The word, once accepted, becomes a response, a confession of faith, which spreads to others and invites them to believe. ...The light of Christ shines, as in a mirror, upon the face of Christians; as it spreads, it comes down to us, so that we too can share in that vision and reflect that light to others, in the same way that, in the Easter liturgy, the light of the paschal candle lights countless other candles. Faith is passed on from one person to another, just as one candle is lighted from another. ...It is through an unbroken chain of witnesses that we come to see the face of Jesus.”*

Third. The first reading from the prophet Isaiah speaks of the joy of restored life and hope in Jerusalem following Israel’s exile in Babylon. In living out our missionary call we too, are messengers of Gospel hope and joy. Commenting on today’s scriptures Pope Francis states that the nature of discipleship, and Church membership, is not to socialize, but to go out and proclaim the Kingdom of God. When we choose to take up the call the kingdom breaks out all around us. The hungry are fed, the grieving comforted, the homeless and stranger sheltered and welcomed, the poor in body and spirit embraced as the children of God causing “hearts to rejoice and bodies to flourish like the grass.”

The campaign is on. May God who has begun a good work in us bring it to completion.

7 July, 2019 *Gather 'round*