

Co-workers with Christ

a sermon preached on the

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Lecture: Mark 6:1-13

When Jesus went back home to Nazareth, and to the people with whom he had grown up; it soon became clear to them that he had changed. He had found his true vocation of teaching the scriptures and healing. The people were not expecting this. They wanted to see him come back as he had left them. In this way they could feel comfortable in his presence. In this way he would not be a challenge or a threat to them.

However, Jesus was back home, and dearly wanted to share his gifts with his own people, but instead of being welcomed, they rejected him. As soon as he began to speak in the synagogue they could see that he had the gift of wisdom. At first they were impressed, yet instead of being happy with this, and opening themselves to what he had to offer, they asked, "Where did he get all this knowledge?" They figured that someone had written it all out for him, but the simple answer was: It was in him all the time.

How often have we heard parents ask, "where did he/she get all this?", hearing one of their children come out with something that astounded them.

In these events we are dealing with the mystery of a person's development. Who are we to set limits and boundaries to what another person is capable of? The people of Nazareth remembered Jesus' humble origins and they became jealous. They were actually saying, "who does he think he is?" They had set boundaries on his capabilities. They refused to believe in him. They refused to take him seriously, and because of their attitude, they made it impossible for him to do anything for them.

It is a sad but familiar story. Often we fail to acknowledge the gifts and talents of those who are close to us, in our families, neighbourhood or community of faith. We limit their effectiveness and worse still, we ridicule them, and put them down. When we experience this sort of thing we feel frustrated and helpless, and we may be tempted to say – "That's it! I'm finished!"

Jesus didn't react like that. He didn't become embittered. He did what little he could in Nazareth, then he decided to take his gifts and talents elsewhere.

Up to now, the Apostles had been with Jesus. However, the time had now come for Jesus to send them out to work for mission, by spreading the new of the Kingdom of God. The time had come for them to get involved in God's work. He sent them out in twos so that they could support one another. He empowered them to speak and act in his name.

Each and everyone of us who had received the light of Christ in baptism, is called to carry that light in Christ's name. The source of all Christian mission is in baptism; its development may come in confirmation, and its sustenance is the bread of life – The Holy Eucharist.

The work of mission and outreach is not just the work of the ordained, it is also the responsibility of the laity. Together, we are challenged to be active not passive followers; to be givers not just receivers; not barren or dead branches of the vine, but living and fruitful ones.

During the Korean War, a south Korean village was under heavy artillery bombardment. In the village was a small Catholic church. Outside the church stood a statue of Christ. When the smoke of the battle cleared

away, the statue had disappeared. it had been blown off its pedestal and lay in fragments. A group of soldiers helped the priest to put the statue together again. They found all the pieces except the hands. The soldiers offered to have new hands made, but the priest refused.

“Let’s leave it without hands,” he said, “and we will write these words on the pedestal. Friend, lend me your hands. In that way passersby will come to see that Jesus now has no hands but yours, with which to raise up the fallen, feed the poor, cure the sick and be pastor to all.”

This incident helps to bring out the message in today’s gospel, in that Jesus expects each of us, lay or ordained to lend a hand and share in his work.

Sometimes, people don’t want to be involved. They feel it is easier to leave it to others. You have hear the comments –“ he or she can do it better than me, leave it to them .”

Of course experts are needed for specialised jobs, but the non-specialist also had a lot to contribute and often has a warmer heart. The sick have as much need of companionship as of medicine, the elderly need someone to spend time with them, the young need someone to show an interest in them. This is work we can all do.

The main qualification is a caring heart. The Bible starts with the story of how God made human beings partners in creation. A great responsibility has been laid upon us all. A great honour conferred on us. All of us are responsible for God’s world and for one another. We are stewards of creation and we are co-workers with Christ.

Amen.

References: Holy Gospel of Mark, Chapter 6 v. 1-13
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