

Thursday, Fourth Week in Ordinary Time

Mark 6:7-13

He began to send them out in pairs

Jesus had a point to score when he made the choice of the twelve men from among his followers. He knew what he was up to and this was a well calculated move on his side. Just as the chosen people were founded on the twelve tribes of Israel Jesus was bent on establishing something new along the well-known framework of the chosen people. Just as the twelve sons of Jacob formed the foundation of Israel in the Old Testament, the twelve chosen men were going to be the basis of a new Israel. He was set to use these men to play a unique role in the founding of the new people of God. At the same time, it is interesting that in Mark's Gospel account today Our Lord is refraining from sending them out as twelve isolated individuals but in pairs. One would be inclined to think that spreading them out would be far more beneficial than sending them out in pairs. Our Lord would like to underline the value of a shared witness and ministry. We are not loners in the vineyard of the Lord. In fact, everyone has a role to play. A shared witness has a far richer impact than one springing from lone soul. The effectiveness of his mission is not to be judged in terms of numbers but in terms of a sense of cohesion, interconnectedness and interdependence among his people. There is so much drive towards co-responsibility in the management and existence of our church structures today. Days are gone when everything depended on the one person of the ordained person in the affairs of a community of faith. For sure Jesus saw a greater value in a shared responsibility among his followers. No one was to work alone; each would have some other and even more to work along each other. As disciples of the Lord today, we are mandated to work jointly, and not as individuals or loners. When we work jointly, we learn to receive from and give to each other and, thereby, the Lord is more fully present to the community. He did say that where two or three are gathered in his name he would be in their midst. Even Paul, the great apostle to the Gentiles, was very much aware of the debt he owed to what he called his co-workers. The Lord mandates us to work together if his work is to be done in today's world. As members of the Lord's body, we are interdependent. The whole point at stake is that in the life of faith, we never go it alone.