

HOMILY - SIXTH SUNDAY IN EASTER "B" 5-6-2018

Jesus tells his apostles in today's Gospel "**you are chosen, you are appointed, go and bear fruit.**"

I want to suggest that these words of Jesus were not meant only for his apostles - they are just as much meant for you and me today. They are a call for us as individuals and as a parish to become "**missionary disciples.**" The Second Vatican Council viewed the laity as full participants with the clergy in the Church's divine mission, primarily through their engagement with the world in which they live. Pope Francis calls us to live our faith wherever we are. We have been empowered by the Holy Spirit to be missionary disciples by our baptism. We are chosen, appointed and sent forth.

There are two obstacles that can work against us becoming "missionary disciples." The first obstacle is for a parish community to fall into what we can call a "maintenance mode" - we are doing okay, the parishioners seem happy, the collections are good, the bills are paid and the liturgies are fine. Let's not rock the boat.

The second obstacle is what has been called "Sanctuary Catholicism." This mind set refers to the belief that my holiness only grows on what happens on church grounds. The more time spent on church grounds, the holier I will be. The more times I go to Mass, the holier I will be, the more times I go to confession, the holier I will be, the more time I spend at church meetings, the holier I will be, the more time I spend at Adoration, the holier I will be, the more money I give to build or maintain the church facilities, the holier I will be. These are all good and necessary things, the danger is that we can conclude that the work of God **only happens** on our church property.

The Second Vatican Council challenges these dangers. It insisted that ministry is not limited to only parish property; ministry is to happen everywhere. The vision of the Council was that all the world - its joys, horrors, wonder, wounds, celebration and lament is the world that God is interested in, where holiness can be lived and practiced.

Pope Francis continually challenges the Church to "go out". He encourages us to be a community that is "permanently in a state of mission." He invites us to go to our homes, our neighborhoods, our social events, our workplaces, our nursing homes and our gathering places and be a gift of God's love and to share that gift.

All Christians are called to share the faith with joy. Jesus entrusted this evangelization not to an "exclusive and elite" group of professionals, but to all his followers. When a parish community can accept this call it gives it a sense of purpose, a drive, a resolution, a reason for existing, a commitment and devotion to spreading the love of Jesus that we experience at Eucharist.

The ideal parish is where the parishioners live a "baptismal faith" - where everyone is engaged in ministry everywhere. In "**Evangelii Gaudium**", Pope Francis' encyclical on evangelization, he seems concerned about a church that has become self-preoccupied.

But he offers an antidote and the antidote is mission.

At our Baptism we were empowered by the Holy Spirit to be missionary disciples. Why do we go to Mass and liturgy each week? The most obvious reason is that we need that connection with the Word, the Eucharist and the community. But another reason is to be better prepared to bring the good news of Jesus out the church doors and share it with others. The Word and the Eucharist are not private, they are to be carried out into our homes and shared wherever we go.

Pope Francis encourages us to follow Jesus, be a person of mercy like Jesus, accompany the weak and sorrowing, befriend the lonely, hear the cry of the poor and receive the light of Christ and share that light. **"It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit that will remain."**

Closing Story 5-5-2018

Finally, a woman said that she went with her husband when he went to get a haircut. She was reading a magazine and she found a hairstyle that she really thought was awesome. So she asked the receptionist if she could take the magazine next door to make a copy of the photo. "You'll need some ID, a driver's license or a credit card", the receptionist said.

"But my husband is here getting a haircut", she explained. "Yes", the woman at the desk said, "But I need something that you will come back for."