

Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time
July 3, 2016

We are in the midst of a busy political season. The campaigns seem very long and exhausting and even annoying, depending on your point of view. For almost a year now, one politician or another has insisted people in the United States accept their line of thinking and to back them for office.

Of course, each candidate is offering something to those they are addressing. Each them also has teams of supporters who go all over the country spreading their version of the good news of the benefits their candidate will bring.

Jesus, of course, was no political candidate, though some of his contemporaries felt politically threatened by His presence and message. Jesus did, however, gather a fairly good-sized group of supporters to spread his message.

We just heard about them in today's Gospel.

Jesus had already gathered 12 close disciples and incorporated them into his ministry of spreading the good news of God's love and mercy. Those 12 are often seen in the Gospels to represent the 12 tribes of the house of Israel.

But in today's Gospel passage, Jesus appointed 72 others to go ahead of him as well. Those 72, in St. Luke's global point of view, represented the all the diverse nations of the world. Jesus' mission and message were intended for all. Not just the House of Israel.

Jesus' inclusion of others in his mission of spreading God's good news made clear the importance and universality of his work. That work of

evangelization continues throughout history. And you and I have inherited the continuation of that role. Without our cooperation, the work of spreading the good news will not be completed.

In taking on the role to which we are called, we take our cue from Jesus' mission to the 72, a mission of urgency and detachment. Jesus spoke of the harvest being ready and abundant. When the wheat is ready, it must be harvested. Delay will allow the wheat to go bad or be taken by others.

We must not miss opportunities to bring Jesus' message to the people God has placed in our lives. Jesus said "Into whatever house you enter ..." That means there'll be many opportunities to witness to God's love and care by our actions and words.

Not all will accept our offer, but that is their choice. Jesus did not force his love and call on anyone. God gives free will to all. Some "went away sad," unable or unwilling to respond to God in Jesus. That will happen with us, as well. Perseverance and prayer will bring fruit in the end.

The other characteristic of Jesus' mission is detachment. We go "like lambs among wolves." We "carry no money bag, no sack, no sandals, and greet no one along the way." We "eat and drink what is offered" to us.

All our trust is in Jesus and the message given by God. We are Jesus' messengers, not our own. Any benefit comes from the working of God within us and in those we meet.

It is through our faith that will let God's Spirit bring the harvest. Our own lives and presentation may fall short. That is OK. If we are detached, we make room for God's grace to work.