

Dear Brothers and Sisters



Having just graduated college in 1990, I was invited to a Vocational meeting in Italy. There were 800 of us there – young men from all over the world who were discerning the call to the priesthood.

The man running the meeting was not a priest, but a Spanish layman, Kiko Arguello.

He said to us that Jesus did not have seminaries to form his disciples, but that their formation was to be sent out two by two by Him to announce the Gospel. They were to “take no gold, nor silver, nor copper in their belts, no bag for the journey, nor two tunics.” They were sent “as sheep in the midst of wolves” for “a disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master.” (cf Matt 10; 9-24)

Kiko said that we would do the same. To discern if we were called to the seminary, we were invited to do the same thing the disciples did. Thus, the eight hundred of us were divided into four hundred pairs, chosen by lottery, and sent to cities and towns throughout Europe, to “preach as you go, saying, “The kingdom of heaven is at hand.” (Matt 10; 7)

My companion, chosen by chance, was Anthony from Bombay, India (modern day Mumbai) and were sent to Dublin. We had a return ticket, and nothing else. For ten days were in Dublin, visiting priests and announcing to them “The kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

We had the door slammed in our face. Not one priest welcomed us or gave us hospitality. Most of them were angry, saying this was completely irresponsible to do what we were doing. We slept on the street and in the homeless shelter.

Yet, in spite of this, or perhaps because of it, during those ten days I experienced a peace and a joy I had never experienced before. I could not explain it. When we were rejected by a priest, Anthony would say to me – “we are no better than him, let us pray a Rosary for him and for his parish, we are not worthy to be rejected, because Jesus himself was rejected. Jesus saved the world by accepting rejection.”

The police came one night and found us sleeping on some cardboard in the street, they asked us what we were doing. When we told them, they said “what you are doing is very important, go to the youth of this city, because they are lost and in need of what you have to say.”

Each one of us has been sent to announce the kingdom of heaven. Maybe we won't have to sleep on the street tonight, maybe no one is going to slam a door in our face today, but nevertheless all of us have an occasion to bear witness to the love of God. We can do this by losing our life out of love for someone else, “Whoever finds his life will lose it, whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.” (Matt 10:39)

Fr. Sean