

Dear Brothers and Sisters



Plane ticket – Check

Beach Pass - Check

Hotel Reservation - Check

Many of us are planning to take a summer vacation within the next few weeks or so. Plans have been made, reservations booked, hotels confirmed, shopping and packing is underway.

Jesus sends his disciples-seventy-two of them- out on a journey, but tells them to make no such plans. They are to take no luggage,

no money, make no reservations, have no itinerary. It seems crazy, but this is the pastoral work that Jesus employed. There is no plan of action, no committee, no survey to test the waters, no office staff or agenda. He sends them out with nothing to the towns that he himself intends to visit.

The disciples are sent out to knock on doors and simply say ‘Peace be with you’ and ‘The kingdom of God is at hand.’ I don’t know what you would do if someone knocked on your door this evening and said that. You would probably think they were nuts. Chances are you wouldn’t even open the door, and if you did you would say ‘Thank you very much but I’m Catholic’ or even call the cops.

Jesus is no fool, he knows that this is exactly what awaits the disciples –rejection. They are going to have doors slammed in their face, they are going to be ridiculed and ostracized. I bet hardly anyone welcomed them, no said ‘Thanks for coming, we’ve been waiting for you, would you like something to eat? Do you need a place to sleep?’

God forbid someone rings our doorbell uninvited! For crying out loud, who can that be now? What a nuisance, can’t they see we’re busy? Don’t they know we are eating? Don’t they know we’re watching telly?

And yet Jesus sends the disciples out in this way precisely to form them as disciples. This is the school, this is the lesson they are being taught, to go out in his name and have doors slammed in their faces, to be rejected. Why?

This rejection carries a mystery. When a door is slammed in your face, literally or figuratively (e.g. ‘Thanks but I’m busy now, can you come back later’) The disciples face two possibilities – they will either get mad at the people who do not welcome them, or they will accept the rejection, offering it for the very people who reject them. They will walk away, hungry, tired, and pray for the one who sent them away.

In this acceptance lies the key to the way God has acted with us. He has never knocked at the door of our life and simply barged in, even though he would have every right to. He always waits to be invited, but many times he is not. If we are sincere, we have all turned him away, we each need to say *Mea Culpa*. Our dealings with others, our treatment of them, our understanding or lack thereof, our patience or irritability, our reticence or zeal, our truculence or willing spirit are all ways in which Jesus is either welcomed or sent away packing.

When we have rejected him, in others, he has returned good for evil. He takes this rejection upon himself, and offers it vicariously for those who do not deserve it.

The disciples came back from their journey rejoicing. Can you believe that having doors shut in your face would make you rejoice? Do you believe they had a better time than if they had been welcomed? Maybe a door won’t be shut in your face today but one thing is for sure, an experience of rejection -no matter how small- awaits you: a misunderstanding, an unkind word or look, a phone call not returned, an attitude or body language, or a comment made. It is there that Jesus is found. Will we recognize him, or send him away?

Fr. Sean