

Homily for the 14th Sunday in Ordinary Time

July 6-7, 2019

Readings: Isaiah 66:10-14c; Galatians 6:14-18; Luke 10:1-12,17-20

Preacher: Deirdre McKiernan Hetzler

“Rejoice!” “Rejoice with Jerusalem and be glad because of her!....Exult! Exult with her all you who were mourning over her.”

“Thus says the Lord.” God is offering comfort and a promise of a new beginning to a people disheartened by years of exile. They are bone tired. Exhausted in every way. Physically. Mentally. Spiritually. They are straggling home after years of oppression in Babylon. Years of humiliation, cut off from their land and their God. And bone tired from the rigors of travel.

Now God is offering hope and renewal. Isaiah paints a tender portrait of a maternal God—one whose consoling breast offers nourishment for weary souls. And hope for a better future.

Anticipating those promised blessings, what, instead, do the refugees find at first? Further suffering. A land in ruins. And economic hardship. We know that a loving God ultimately renews and comforts them, helping them rebuild their lives. Giving them reason to rejoice .

How this story must speak to the refugees at our border! Coming from oppression. Hunger. Gang wars. Real dangers for their children. Bone tired and exhausted in every way. Yet trusting in God.

And what do they find here? Refuge and comfort? A church – the People of God—that lives the Gospel? Or one that has lost sight of the mission Jesus gave us?

In today's gospel, Jesus' disciples have been with him for some time, and now they are being sent out to represent him. These personal, hand-picked ambassadors for Christ are ordinary, everyday folk, very much like us, entrusted with an important mission. Just as we are.

This commission story follows three stories that we heard last week. Stories

of would-be disciples making excuses for not immediately responding to Jesus' call. And they all seemed like good reasons to delay, didn't they? Jesus insists that responding must be a priority. No matter how many times you and I may have delayed our responses, the invitation to follow—to accept the mission of Jesus—still stands.

Jesus sets out that mission clearly in chapter 4 of Luke's gospel. God has anointed him— and us as his people— to bring good news to the poor, release to captives, and freedom to the oppressed. Furthermore, in chapter 25 of Matthew's gospel, often referred to as “the judgment of the nations,” Jesus calls his disciples to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, care for the sick, visit prisoners. And so forth. In living this mission, people will know by our words and actions that God is very close and doing good things. They will know that the Kingdom of God is now.

Jim Wallis, the evangelical minister and editor of *Sojourners* magazine, writes: “Like any historical moment, this one offers the opportunity to reveal the gospel of Jesus Christ.... any gospel that is not good news for the poor is not the gospel of Jesus—period. And when Jesus calls us to love our neighbors as ourselves, and even our enemies—with no exceptions—he really means it.”

How is this possible, especially in this historical moment? The answer is neither easy nor simple. But the very Spirit of Jesus has been given to us to enable us to sort it all out. And, like the Israelite refugees, God has promised comfort and assistance to us. As Isaiah tells us, the Lord's power shall be known to his servants.

May we be the vehicle of comfort, the cause of rejoicing, that God promises in Isaiah. May we channel God's love and mercy to our broken world.