

Homily

July 3, 2022

14th Sunday in Ordinary Time

22:02-33:03

Before I went on Pilgrimage in early June, the organizer of the Pilgrimage sent us some helpful information. Not only the Itinerary but be sure that you bring this and that. But the most helpful piece for me being on Pilgrimage was a one-page description of “What Is a Pilgrim?” and “What does a Pilgrim expect on Pilgrimage?”

It was a very clear instruction: bring only those things that are essential. Don't bring extras. We're not going to dress up fancy. So don't bring your gown or your suit. Dress comfortably and simply. And bring with you a spirit of simplicity, not only in how you pack, but in how you are open to God in the experience of Pilgrimage.

He went on to say, “You are not a tourist.” Tourists go with so much stuff and they bring home even an extra suitcase full of stuff. Have you ever been a tourist? Oh, yeah. It's like, “We've got to bring this back and that back. And I want that for this nook and that cranny.” He said, No. It's okay to bring some stuff back, but that's not the point of our going. Our going is to find the Lord in the midst of our journey, from church to church, Mass to Mass, the experience of the Catholic culture of the four countries that we were going to. Keep it simple.

When we got on the plane, especially the big plane to head over to Europe, one of the surprising things was another instruction: In case of an emergency, follow the lights in the floor and leave your carry-ons behind. Whether the carry-on is above or below, just leave it behind. And I thought, my Kindle? My phone? My C-pap? (Because when you travel overseas, you have to take it with you.) And I said, “What's most important here?” The urgency is safety and life.

Fascinating that this past Monday when I first read the Gospel passage, it was, “Oh my!” The Lord is expecting these disciples, this further seventy-two, to travel simply and to be disciples with urgency.

He tells them first of all to go two-by-two, not three-by three, not four-by-four, just keep it simple, two-by-two. And carry no money bag, no this, no that. And greet people simply with, “Peace be with you,” or “Peace be to this house,” when you arrive. Don't dawdle along the way with extra

conversation. This is urgent. I'm going to visit these villages. I need you to get them ready. To live simply and do the simplicity of message. "The kingdom of God is at hand for you." No more. No less.

Whether we're Pilgrims, my brothers and sisters, or whether we're missionaries, living a simple life, having what we basically need and keeping focused on the message in Christ is essential.

Paul demonstrates that in the Second Reading when he says, "I will boast in nothing but the Cross." Now, we know Paul. Paul's the guy with the long run-on sentences. Right? (You've been a lector. You know what it's like to read Paul. Paul, could you just put in a punctuation point somewhere?)

Paul was a great theologian. He was an excellent writer. He traveled on four different missions. He was well known. And yet his only boast would have been in the simplicity of the Cross, that embodied for him the revelation that needed to be spread. And he was very urgent about it. Once he set aside being Saul and became Paul, the rest of his life was spent in that way. Simply and urgently.

Do you have a lot of stuff? Do you have a lot of stuff? So do I. Do you have a lot of books? Yeah. How many have more than one electronic device? Even you! (pointing at a child) And you're only how old? Five! And you are already burdened...right?

How many of them are essential to living? I have to ask myself that question constantly. Is this essential? Is it essential to the message? Is it essential to my role as pastor or priest? Is it essential to my life in Christ, or my life in family? Most of it's not. But boy, can it be distracting. Really distracting. Are you raising your hand? Okay. (Stephenie Paquette shares a thought.)

Okay. She's got an essential question here, so - It's actually two questions. First is: Is this stuff that I have that I recognize today - do I really need it? And do I really want to care for it for the rest of my life? (We're both older. We know what that's like. Yes.)

I'm not saying these things are bad, my brothers and sisters, but so many things in our lives aren't essential. And if we are to proclaim from the simple life, the urgency of the message that the Kingdom of God is in our midst, we have to renounce those things. Or we have to name them as not essential.

So I would urge us all - since we've got some free time, right? I mean it's a holiday weekend. We've got a little bit of extra free time. (Anybody here gotta work today or tomorrow? That's wrong! But I can't stop you. I mean it's wrong in the sense that it would be so nice if you didn't have to.)

But in the free time, ask yourself, “What does this mean to me?” The Kingdom of God is at hand for me. And how does that affect all the things that I have?

And then ask yourselves:

Is spreading the joy and the message of the Cross, which we’ve heard from Paul, the opening prayer and the Psalm: is that really urgent in my life? Am I willing to make that choice every day? Setting aside some of the distractions and proclaiming “the Kingdom of God is in our midst” and “I have felt it. And I believe it.”

We’re on Pilgrimage. We’re on mission. We are called to keep it simple. And be urgent.