



Mark 6:7-13

7 Jesus summoned the Twelve and began to send them out in pairs giving them authority over the unclean spirits. 8 And he instructed them to take nothing for the journey except a staff - no bread, no haversack, no coppers for their purses. 9 They were to wear sandals but, he added, 'Do not take a spare tunic.' 10 And he said to them, 'If you enter a house anywhere, stay there until you leave the district. 11 And if any place does not welcome you and people refuse to listen to you, as you walk away shake off the dust from under your feet as a sign to them.' 12 So they set off to preach repentance; 13 and they cast out many devils, and anointed many sick people with oil and cured them.

Other readings: Amos 7:12-15 Psalm 84 (85) Ephesians 1:3-14

Earlier in the gospel, in chapter 3, the evangelist told us of the choice of the Twelve by Jesus. They were to be his companions and to be sent out to preach and cast out devils. It comes as no surprise now that Jesus sends them out in twos 'with authority over unclean spirits'. Just as Jesus announces the coming of the Kingdom of God by preaching and mighty works, so too will the disciples confirm their preaching by their healing ministry.

They are to take no provisions for the journey. They are allowed a staff and sandals, which might have been considered essential for travelling on foot on the rough paths of rural Galilee, but they are not allowed to take provisions of any kind. They must trust that all will be provided. Furthermore, they are to remain at the house of whoever shows them hospitality.

Jesus has already spoken of the rejection of his preaching, the seed not growing to fruition. He has experienced the antagonism of the people of his own home town of Nazareth. He warns here of the lack of welcome the Twelve may experience. Some will be unwilling to listen to them. They are to shake the dust off their feet as they depart, showing that they cut all ties with those who refuse the good news.

The evangelist reports that the disciples, like Jesus, set off to 'preach repentance', and that they 'cast out devils', expelling the evil forces which were thought to cause suffering. We hear for the first time of the anointing of the sick with oil, and their healing. There are no reports in the gospels of Jesus using oil to anoint the sick.

In experiencing rejection both Jesus and the disciples follow in the footsteps of the prophets. Today we hear also of the banishment from Israel of the prophet Amos, who had sought to challenge the injustice practised in the kingdom.

Do you trust in the providence of God?

How can you offer others the good news of Jesus?

Let us pray for openness to the message of the gospel in our society today.

Let us pray for those who are anointed in the Sacrament of the Sick.