

# Connecting With the Sunday Readings

Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

A popular magazine these days is dedicated to the simple life. We crave simplicity in an era where having lots of stuff seems to be of great value. Storage sheds dot our landscape. Apparently, there's not enough room in our homes for all the stuff we have accumulated.

The same can be said about our use of time. There's not enough. Simplify life and you will have some time for yourself. Easily said, but not easily done. Still, we value a simplified life so that we can do what's most important. This was in the mind of Jesus when he sent out his first disciples, two by two, to carry his message to those who did not know it. Travel lightly. Take nothing extra with you. Having too many things to worry about can cause one to lose focus. This is a timeless message.

## A Gospel Word for the Home

### Mark 6:7-13

In Jesus' mind was the plan that he would need help in spreading the Kingdom of God. He could not do it alone, nor did he really want to. He came into the world to stir the pot, to involve as many as possible in spreading the Good News of God's merciful love. But Jesus was also a realist. He knew that the work of spreading the Gospel could get mixed up with all sorts of peripheral activities.

This week we read again of the simplicity that should accompany the work of Gospel spreading and Gospel-living! Go out into the world and bring nothing but yourself and your message. Sounds simplistic, but it is far from it. The Gospel is not based on power or impressiveness. It's not fireworks. It stands on its own simplicity. The power of God is not built on anything from this world. It comes directly from God's Spirit, available to all.

### Thought for the Week

Besides the simplicity is the fact that Jesus sent out the first disciples two-by-two. There's something deeply communal about Christian faith. This is often forgotten in a culture that is rooted in individualism. We value accomplishments that are done by a solo performer. We like to applaud the most valuable player, the individual who is judged to be the best.

Against this focus on the individual, stands this Christian tradition of what might be called team play. The first disciples did their business as a shared activity. Today we hear about collaboration in the Church. The smallest unit of community in the Church is the family. In recent years the Church has applauded the work of spreading the Gospel in the family. This is done primarily through living the Gospel of life and love in the home. Family relationships carry the Word of God from family member to family member. This goes on day after day. It's not spectacular, but it has all the power that those first disciples experienced as they left Jesus and traveled from place to place with only the clothes on their backs.

—by David Thomas, PhD, Co-Director, The Bethany Family Institute

## Parent Survival

Let's look back at the virtue of simplicity. Today we read about something new called "parent burn-out." It's a condition that affects every good and responsible parent. Parents who are not responsible never experience this condition. Its cause is a lack of balance in the lives of parents. Today's Gospel reading holds a clue for addressing this situation.

Parents work hard to acquire all the things they judge as needed by their families. They are bombarded by commercials that are designed to convince families that they need a lot. Each family is different, but part of the malaise of parent burnout is that there's little time left for simply enjoying the basic pleasures of life. Having two or three jobs leaves no time for play. This is not an easy matter and there are no simple solutions. Each parent does well to take into account whether they are too focused on carrying a lot of stuff through life or if they should simplify.

## Car or Meal Talk

What might each family member do to make life a little simpler for himself or herself?

## One-Line Prayer

Dear Lord, help us to learn your simple message of love. Amen.