

When Jesus commissioned his own on their first missionary journey, they were free to follow his directions. They were not to be bound up by any other protocol except that of preaching the good news and in this, they were successful. With joy they returned to Jesus to give an account of their activities. Jesus' vision of Satan falling from the sky was probably a reference to the power of evil that was now being eclipsed by God's emerging kingdom of goodness, justice and truth. When each of us hears the final call to come home to God, we will also have to give an account of our service and ourselves. Jesus will not pay much interest in how precisely we abided by the many directives of the Church's liturgy, nor to the protocols of hierarchy. Rather we will be asked to account for how well we stripped ourselves of 'useless foliage' and concentrated on what are truth, justice and service to the Gospel and the poor. The harvest continues to be abundant and the labourers few and together we must ask the harvest master for what we need and trust that God hears. And that all this will be scripted in heaven by name.

REFLECTION 2: LIKE LAMBS AMONG WOLVES

Helen Keller could neither see nor hear, blind and deaf from birth, yet she became a great public speaker. One night after a lecture someone in the audience asked her this question: 'Helen, if you could have one wish granted, what would it be?' The questioner thought she might say; 'I wish for the ability to see and hear'. But instead she said, 'I wish for world peace'. Jesus would have applauded Helen's beautiful response for that is what Jesus told his followers they were to be, instruments of his peace in the world; 'happy are they who work for peace', Jesus told the crowds. And he added, 'God will call them his children' (Matt: 5: 9)

In today's Gospel, Jesus empowered and sent his 72 disciples out to proclaim this good news. Think for instance of all the catechists, teachers, priests, brothers and sisters, serving in parishes today throughout the world. The challenge is great, but so is the need. In some parts of our world, announcing the good news of salvation is a dangerous business. In 1968 the Latin American Bishops' meeting at Medellin, Colombia sent out the word that God has a special love for the poor and the option to serve them should take priority. Many Catechists took their lives into their hands to teach it. They were 'to be workers, not master builders, ministers not messiahs, rather they were to be prophets of a future not their own. Quoting the words of Jesus in today's Gospel, 'Go on your way, behold I am sending you like lambs among wolves. I have given you power to tread upon serpents and scorpions and upon the full force of the enemy and nothing will harm you' (Lc. 10: 1-20).

On November 19th 1964 in the Congo, rebels took a nun, Sister Antoinette, a missionary sister, prisoner; they mocked and tortured her, stabbed her several times and threw her into a river infested with crocodiles. Today that village square is called the 'The Square of Martyrs'. Like the 72 Jesus sent out, she furthered the ministry of the Gospel in all she did and said. We can also recall Mother Teresa of Calcutta whose company of sisters ministered to the sick poor, and who in her own inner life suffered 'a dark night of the soul'. Paul in our second reading writes about bearing the 'marks of Jesus on his body' (Gal. 6: 14). In the course of his ministry he was imprisoned, beaten, stoned, shipwrecked, rejected and mocked and yet in his many letters there is a sense of joy and encouragement for us to follow in his footsteps. Such as so do, are promised by Jesus to have 'their names written in heaven'.

Those persecuted for their faith, show the world an alternative reality where peace and mercy thrive and where all feel welcome. On the Feast of St Kevin, while ordaining eight new deacons for the Dublin diocese, Archbishop Diarmuid Martin expressed his conviction in his homily, that unless the joy of the Gospel message becomes tangible among priests and the people of God, there was little hope for vocations to the priesthood and religious life in our Diocese for the future. Finally, just as Jesus' mission flowed from his relationship with the Heavenly Father, so would our mission in life flow from that same intimacy we personally share with Jesus.

