

Standing in front of a big puddle outside a pub was an old Irishman, drenched, holding a stick, with a piece of string dangling in the water. A passer-by stopped and asked, "What are you doing?" "Fishing," the old man replied. Feeling sorry for the old man, the gent says, "Come in out of the rain and have a drink with me." In the warmth of the pub, as they sip their whiskies, the gentleman, being a bit of a smart aleck, could not resist asking, "So how many have you caught today?" "You're the 8<sup>th</sup>," said the old man. Moral of the story: Don't mess with old people!

First, some background on the gospel text. We are told that Jesus sent them out in pairs, two by two. It would certainly have been more efficient to send them out as solo practitioners, and thereby double the reach of towns they could cover. Why were they paired? Jesus knew, as wise people have known throughout the ages, that there are no self-made or self-sufficient persons. Everyone has a belly button, proof that none of us got here on our own. And despite a short-lived success as solo artist or star athlete, in the end it is the one who learns to play on a team, to trust and help build the team, to rely on and find strength within the community, who really wins the day. Jesus knew our propensity to compare our resumes, to seek personal greatness, and to compete with one another. It leads to our worse failures. Only as we learn to work and live in community will the work of the church – and us – survive. (help from GRACEWORKS, 15 July 2018, p. 17)

Also, disregarding what their mothers had surely told them from the time they were little, Jesus sent them off without any provisions except sandals, a staff and the clothes on their backs. My mother, being a nurse, ALWAYS insisted on an extra pair of clean underwear! The 12 were to rely on those who received them. Jesuit Fr. Silvano Fausti comments that they were sent without anything -- because when we have things, that is what we think we can give. When we have nothing in our hands or in our pack, we can only give what comes from inside us. Perhaps that's the symbolic import of Jesus sharing His power over the demons. All that the disciples had to give was what they had received from Him, qualities that can't be contained in a sack or carried on a belt. (CELEBRATION, 15 July 2018, p. 3) Jesus wanted them to learn to receive the gifts of the world as they offered generosity and hospitality back to the traveling disciples. The totally self-sufficient person never learns this, doesn't think they have to learn it, and would not trust it anyway. But the true portfolio of riches for any one of us is not the number in our bank accounts, but the number of people with whom we have shared genuine fellowship and love. It is a bankrupt life to get to the end with a big number of coins, but few companions who have loved us – and whom we have loved.

So, second, so what? Coupling this gospel with the other two readings, we are reminded that we are called, chosen, summoned and sent. But HOW? We are, as Ephesians reminds us, chosen "to be holy....." So what does holy look like? And here I have some bad news and some good news. The bad news is that the rest of this homily will contain 10 things that define holiness. Now don't pop your homiletical buttons! But the good news is that your Mass-time torture won't be any longer than normal! I'm indebted to Fr. Ronald Rolheiser for this summary.

1. We must be willing to carry more and more of life's complexities with empathy. Few things in life, including our own hearts and motives, are black or white, either-or, simply good or simply bad. Holiness – and maturity -- invite us to see, understand, and accept this complexity and empathy so that, like Jesus, we cry tears of understanding over our own troubled cities AND our own complex hearts.
2. We need to transform jealousy, anger, bitterness, and hatred rather than give them back in kind. Any pain or tension that we do not transform we will retransmit. In the face of jealousy, anger, bitterness, and hatred we must be like water purifiers, holding the poisons and toxins inside of us and giving back

just purified water, rather than being like electrical cords that simply pass on the energy that flows through them.

3. We need to let suffering soften rather than harden our souls. Suffering and humiliation find us all, in full measure, but how we respond to them, with forgiveness or bitterness, will determine the level of our maturity and the depth of our soul. This is perhaps our ultimate moral test: Will my humiliations, disappointments, sufferings soften – or harden my soul?
4. We must forgive. In the end there is only one condition for entering heaven – and living inside the human family – and that is forgiveness. Perhaps the greatest struggle we have in the second-half of our lives is to forgive: Forgive those who have hurt us, forgive ourselves for our own shortcomings, and forgive God for seemingly hanging us out unfairly to dry in this world. The greatest moral imperative of all is not to die with a bitter, unforgiving heart.
5. We must live in gratitude. To be a saint is to be fueled by gratitude, nothing more and nothing less. And if we say we are grateful, but do not tithe 10%, we are deceiving ourselves that we are grateful. God has given us everything – and He asks for only 10% back. If we aren't doing that, we haven't yet gotten the meaning of our life. Do we think it actually belongs to us? And let no one deceive us with the notion that a passion for truth, for church, or even God can top the non-negotiable imperative to be gracious always. Holiness is gratitude. Outside of gratitude we find ourselves doing many of the right things for the wrong reasons.
6. We need to bless more and curse less. We are holy and mature when we define ourselves by what we are FOR rather than by what we are against. Otherwise we become mean and judgmental toward anyone who disagrees with us – or sees things in another way. We want to be like Christ who looked upon others and said "Blessed are you;" He did not curse them by saying "Who do you think you are?" The capacity to praise more than to criticize defines holiness and maturity.
7. We need to live in an ever-greater transparency and honesty. We are as sick as our sickest secret, but we are also as healthy as we are honest. Holiness does not mean that we are perfect or faultless, but that we are honest.
8. We need to pray privately and with the community. The fuel we need to resource ourselves for gratitude and forgiveness does not lie in the strength of our own willpower, but in grace and community. We access that through prayer. We are holy to the degree that we open our own helplessness and invite in God's strength and to the degree that we pray with others that the whole world will do the same thing.
9. Our embrace needs to be ever wider. We grow in holiness to the degree that we define family. Who is my brother or sister? Our definition has to be ever more ecumenical, interfaith, non-ideological and non-discriminatory. It should include black and white, legal and illegal, gay and straight, church-going and not, immigrant and long-timer, newcomer and dear friend. We are holy only when we are compassionate as God is compassionate, namely, when our sun too shines on those we like and those we do not. There comes a time when it is time to turn in our cherished moral placards -- for a basin and a towel. Knowing full well that Judas would betray Him in just a few hours, Christ washed Judas' feet.
10. We need to stand where we stand and let God protect us. In the end, we are all vulnerable, weak, and helpless both to protect our loved ones and ourselves. We cannot guarantee life, safety, salvation, or forgiveness for ourselves or for those we love. Holiness depends upon accepting this with trust rather than anxiety. We can only do our best, whatever our place in life, wherever we stand, whatever our limits, whatever our shortcomings, and trust that this is enough, that if we die at our post, honest, doing our duty as best we can, God will take care of the rest.

God is a prodigiously loving, fully understanding, completely compassionate parent. We are holy and free of false anxiety to the degree that we grasp and trust this truth.

In his autobiography, Morris West suggests that at a certain age our lives simplify and we need have only three phrases left in our spiritual vocabulary: THANK YOU! THANK YOU! THANK YOU! Gratitude is the ultimate virtue, undergirding everything else, even love. It is synonymous with holiness. Gratitude not only defines holiness, it also defines maturity. We are holy and mature to the degree that we are grateful. And you can all be grateful right this minute -- because I'm finished! Let the Church say AMEN. (Rolheiser, posting of 5/16/2018)

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