

HOMILY ~ 14th Sunday in Ordinary Time July 2/3, 2022

There was a man who said the same prayer every morning. *“Lord, if you want me to share my faith with someone today, give me a sign to show me who it is.”* One morning he was going to work. He took the bus to work. A big burley man got on the bus and sat in the seat right next to him. This made our friend very nervous because the bus was more than half empty and the man could have sat anywhere. He wondered why he sat right next to him. Our friend could not wait to get off the bus and get away from this guy. Suddenly the big burley man burst into tears. He shouted out: *“My life is such a mess. I need to find Jesus.”* Now our friend was really uncomfortable. The 15 minutes it took to get to his stop seemed like an eternity. When he got to his stop, he quickly got off the bus. When he was safely off the bus, he bowed his head and prayed: *“Lord, was that a sign?”* Do you wonder how many signs he missed over the years? How many opportunities have you missed over the years? I know I have missed quite a few.

The Gospel Reading today is about sharing our faith. Jesus appointed 72 people to share their faith. Some translations say 70 people. Scripture scholars have spent a lot of time debating what the number means, but I do not think that is very important. I think the important thing is that Jesus reported only a number. We do not know anything about them. I think this is significant because it could be any of us. In fact, I think it is all of us. Jesus is calling all of us to share our faith.

Jesus told them: *“Carry no money bag, no sack, no sandals, and greet no one along the way.”* I think Jesus is telling us not to spend a great deal of time preparing and do not get side tracked. Everybody in the Church today has faith. That is why you are here. You have something to share, and Jesus has a plan for you to share it. I have had people tell me that they do not feel comfortable sharing their faith because the individual may ask a question that they do not know the answer. A good answer for this is that you do not know, but you will find out. This is a good thing. Now you have a reason to have a second conversation with that individual about faith, and this time you will be better prepared. I need a degree in theology because I am the priest. You do not. In fact, I rarely have an in-depth conversation about theology with anyone. Sometimes people have some specific questions, but theological debates are rare.

Sometimes the best thing you can do is invite people to Church, get them here and let others take over from there. I read a survey that showed that if you invite a friend to Church, they say yes about 50% of the time; and the percentage increases with each subsequent invitation. You may have to ask more than once. Inviting people to come to Mass is always a good thing. If they are not Catholic, bring them or meet them here. It must be intimidating for someone who is not Catholic to come. Everyone seems to know each other, everyone seems to know when to sit and stand. Everyone knows the prayers. Be with them so they feel more welcome and comfortable. You can invite people to other events here. The Parish Picnic is a great thing to invite people to, especially young families. They will have a great time and it will put a good face on St. Edith. If they have been through a divorce, invite them to Divorce Care. If they are grieving, invite them to Grief Share. Invite them to the spaghetti dinner. Everyone is welcome to any of our events.

What about our burley guy on the bus? Do you think he was dangerous? Probably not, but we do not know his full story. What do you think he needed? Do you think he wanted to have a theological discussion? I think he just wanted someone to spend some time with him and listen to him. My guess is something terrible happened to him or he was upset about something he did. He probably needed to talk to someone who would listen to him without judging him. Sometimes Church people can be a little too preachy, if you know what I mean. Sometimes we miss opportunities because we just want to skip to the solution. Men particularly like to be problem solvers. Sometimes we jump to: *"You should not feel that way, or everything is going to be ok. Don't worry about it."* Sometimes we just need to talk things through with someone without coming to a solution or conclusion. Maybe you can introduce them to Jesus. Tell them why your faith is important to you. If they are not open to this, that is OK. Maybe by being kind and loving to someone you are just planting the seed that will sprout sometime in the future. Maybe you can refer them to our Parish Social Worker. Maybe you can refer them to me. I will meet with anyone who calls the office to schedule an appointment, and you do not need to explain to the secretary why you want to meet with me. So, how is Jesus calling you to share your faith? Don't miss the opportunity.

Love & Peace,
Fr. Jim