

Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time C - We've got the joy, joy, joy, joy Down in our heart
July 03, 2022.

Many of us learned to sing these words at summer camp sitting around the campfire toasting marshmallows: ***"I ve got the joy, joy, joy, joy Down in my heart (Where?) Down in my heart (Where?) Down in my heart. I ve got the joy, joy, joy, joy Down in my heart Down in my heart to stay."*** Could it be a song that prepares children to one day learn the deeper, more mature understanding of the value called "joy?" Regardless, joy, with a central role in this Sunday's scripture readings, deserves our attention, especially at this moment in history.

The Psalmist (Psalm 66) demands of us: ***"Let all the earth cry out to God with joy. Let all on earth worship and sing praise to you, sing praise to your name!... Come and see the works of God, his tremendous deeds among the children of Adam."*** More significantly, the Gospel reading (Luke 10:1-12, 17-20) reminds us about the Seventy-two disciples, sent out to spread the Good News of God in Christ, who returned successfully from their mission with a spirit of joy in their hearts. They returned, shouting with joy, ***Lord, even the demons were subject to us."*** ***Jesus joined their enthusiasm, I saw Satan fall like lightning from the sky. I have given you power, but do not rejoice because evil spirits are subject to you, but rejoice because your names are written in heaven."*** The victory of the Father had begun.

In giving instructions to the Seventy-two before he sent them out, Jesus told them to enter a house and say, ***"Peace to this house."*** If a peaceful person lives there, your peace will rest upon him. If not it will return to you. **The Lord's instructions to the Seventy-two are for us too. The church's task of sending out missionaries is an urgent one and goes on in every age. Jesus invites us to learn what it is to be an evangelizer. All that is required is an effort on our part to allow the goodness of God to shine in our lives. We can truly find joy in the meaning faith gives to our lives.** True evangelizers must have a faith commitment that is strong: the disciples are told that they must be single-minded – their greatest treasure should be the message they bear; it will be this personal conviction that leads others to share in what they have found. **True evangelizers are bearers of peace:** the disciples are told to be aware of the healing and reconciliation their message should bring to their hearers. Jesus also sends the disciples out 'two by two': because the example of **a community that lives by Christ's teaching is an essential part of authentic evangelization.** Finally, Jesus warns against **the spirit of self-importance that can spoil the work of the evangelist: all that should matter is their relationship with God.**

No doubt, the original Seventy-two began with the expectant enthusiasm of aspiring novices, but they returned as seasoned ministers filled with genuine joy. Jesus sent them as lambs into the midst of wolves. It was a difficult, hostile world about which Jesus warned, one true to life in every time and place. The social environment included the usual crowd of bad guys, skeptics, Jewish fundamentalists, Samaritans, Gentiles, and Roman officials. In order to undertake the task they had to overcome their fears with courage and resolve. Jesus told them to travel light – no purse, bag, or sandals. **In order to get the job done, they would not have time to care about material possessions or to waste time on other distractions.** He ordered them, when not welcomed by a group, to wipe the dust off their feet and move on to the next place. The urgency of the moment would not allow them to linger in hopeless situations. They went out among the people, dutifully accomplishing the mission. They were so successful that **they returned in a spirit of joy. It wasn't a superficial, child-like joy of children returning to camp, but a deeper, satisfying, inner joy of the soul.**

Brothers and sisters in Christ, as the current members of the Body of Christ, we are the Seventy-two for our generation. Our mission is not unlike that of those mentioned in Luke's Gospel account, and the guidelines and warnings are largely the same. **The deep inner joy we can find in our 21st century mission for Christ can prove equally meaningful.** Perhaps we can discover the quality and meaning of this kind of joy as we think through the guidelines and warnings Jesus

set for them in the sending. **As we compare what produced for them such joy, we can use it in our ministries as the current generation of Jesus-followers.** As we follow our charge in the Baptismal Covenant, we seek to serve God's people by offering to them the good news of God in Christ, both in sharing the truth and in the actions of care and love. We, too, go out among wolves. We live in a world that is fearful, emotionally paralyzed, or aggressively angry. Many of us suffer from a form of post-traumatic stress disorder caused by acts of terrorism, near financial depression, natural disasters, and unexplainable violence in schools and shopping malls. Far too many of us are driven by fear and self-defensiveness to over-reactive and destructive actions.

Perhaps the hardest example to follow is to take nothing with us. Unfortunately, many of us are disabled by fear of loss in the midst of an overly-materialist culture, in our desire not to give up anything. But we can easily see how the baggage of materialism can disable us from taking committed action. Shaking dust off our feet, a practice of pious Jews during New Testament times, is also difficult. Many of us disdain the idea of giving up on any task. But, perhaps the application for us is to make the best and wisest use of our time and energy – a prioritizing intended to maximize the effectiveness of our call to carry out God's work. With all these in mind, we can follow these warnings and guidelines in our efforts for Christ and to find the deepest joy that life in faith can bring. We can use the challenge from Jesus to the Seventy-two as a model to move boldly into our everyday world, into the lives of those around us – our friends and neighbours, strangers and enemies, skeptics and unbelievers, the bereaved and disconsolate, the poor and victims of injustice, the hopeless and diseased – all who are in need of God. We move forward with courage and commitment in telling others about Christ, bringing them into the life of the Church, welcoming those who come anew into our midst, ministering to all in need, sharing with them what we have, so that they may be healed of their brokenness and find the same joy we have found in the Lord. Above all, it is necessary to overcome the inherent need to avoid vulnerability. To leave behind fear of failure, the inclination to avoid action because we are afraid we will be embarrassed or rejected or that it will be too time-consuming or too difficult or costly. We must grasp life with joy in Christ and seize the opportunity to be among the Seventy-two for our generation. We must go about this task with enthusiasm, commitment, excitement and joy. After all, we are all called not to be just good people but to be committed disciples to spread the Good News of the gospel.

We definitely will do well to emulate a bunkhouse full of Texas cowboys as the legend tells, who once said, "*We loved working cattle so much that we would be awake in the night crying for daylight so we could saddle up and hit the range.*" Can we, too, cry for daylight so we can get to work tending to the call of Christ to reach out to the world in love and sharing? If we go at our task in this way, following a modern expression of the work of the seventy-two, we are certain to experience the same deep, meaningful, fulfilling joy found by our forebears in the faith. Not a superficial kind of happiness or delight, but the joy that takes root deep down in our hearts. So, let us take to heart the words of the old camp song in the deepest and most meaningful understanding of joy, changing its words from "I" to "we" and "my" to "our." **We've got the joy, joy, joy, joy Down in our hearts (Where?) Down in our hearts (Where?) Down in our hearts. We've got the joy, joy, joy, joy Down in our hearts Down in our hearts to stay. Amen**