



When we hear about “the disciples” usually we immediately think of the 12, the 12 disciples chosen by the Lord to be especially close to Him. But in this Gospel reading today we hear of a larger group of disciples, 72 to be exact, that the Lord sends out. So there must have been a large group of disciples following Jesus of whom the 12 disciples were at the very center.

We have this very rich story of the sending of the disciples to do Jesus’ work. Certainly from this story, we could talk about priesthood: Priests, those special ones that Jesus calls to Himself and sends out. But this story is not limited to priesthood. There is much in here from our Lord that relates to the life of every disciple, of every follower of Jesus.

From that, I want to focus on one thing today, detachment. Jesus says to these 72 as He sends them out, “Carry no money bag, no sack, no sandals.” He wants them to be free from material worries as they carry out this mission. Now implicit in this command is the promise that God would provide for them. God doesn’t intend for them to starve. He will take care of them and they are to be unencumbered by material worries.

Jesus calls every one of us to this kind of detachment in our hearts. How we live this detachment out concretely is going to depend on our vocation. A husband and wife are not called to the same kind of literal detachment that, say, a religious sister is. A family must have a house to live in. A family needs to have a bank account in order to provide food. A religious sister is called to own nothing of her own. But all are called to detachment in their hearts.

What does this mean? It means that we don’t cling to things as if we couldn’t live without them.

A great question we can ask ourselves concerning anything we have or anything we do is this: If Jesus asked me to give it up, could I? First of all, could I do it? If the answer is ‘yes’, then there’s a further question. Could I do it willingly, without complaint?

How we answer these questions gives us a pretty good idea of where we are concerning detachment.

So let me give you an example. Let’s say you’re a person who likes to play racquetball (you thought I was going to say golf, didn’t you?). Let’s say you’re a person who likes to play racquetball. You enjoy it. You get good exercise from it. It relaxes you. Maybe

you could even say it makes you a better mother or father because it eases some tension in you and you're more relaxed and peaceful with the kids. It's a good thing in this person's life. It is legitimate recreation and God wants us to have that according to our own tastes.

But if God asked this person to give it up — not that He would necessarily — but if He did, could that person give it up? Then further, could that person give it up willingly, without complaint? Then that person is detached. He can use it with joy as God intended it to be used, but not become a slave to it.

Now here's a great spiritual exercise. Sit in this church sometime with Jesus and go through everything in your life — your car, your house, your vacations, your bank account, your hobbies, your activities, your iPod, your cell phone, everything you can think of practically — and ask these questions: If Jesus asked me to give this up, could I? Could I do it willingly and without complaint?

You know this extends to your relationships too. Not that God would ever want you to stop being a mother or father to your children or a husband or wife to your spouse. But think about this example. If you have a daughter and God called her to be a cloistered nun and you could only see her for one day every other year, could you let her go, willingly and without complaint, to the Lord?

This detachment to which we are called extends to our relationships too.

Why is Jesus calling us to live our lives with this kind of detachment? I mean, we like to have things. We like to be secure in things — and that is exactly the problem. We like to be secure in things, but we can never really be secure in anything, except God.

So, as His disciples, Jesus sends us out, and in our hearts He says to us, "Carry no money bag, no sack, no sandals." What does this give us, this detachment? Freedom. Freedom to love Him with all our being, freedom to serve Him with everything that we are.

You see, God doesn't call us to detachment because He wants to make us miserable. He calls us to detachment so that He can give us a greater life than we could have ever constructed for ourselves with our petty little desires and preferences. Jesus wants to give us the freedom of heart and life to follow Him to eternal life.

So go to the Master, ask Him to show you what you cling to that keeps Him from giving you true freedom, and don't fear. He will not take away from you anything that you truly love. He will only take from you what is keeping you from truly loving.

**Fr. Mark Gurtner at St. Anthony de Padua Catholic Church, South Bend, Indiana
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