

## **Homily 12<sup>th</sup> Sunday in OT Cycle A - June 25, 2017**

Last weekend Dinah and I were in San Antonio, Texas, spending some time with our daughter Laura and her family. Our granddaughter Ava just turned 3 years old. We had a great visit and did a little site seeing as well.

Sunday we attended Mass at Mission San Jose. Founded in 1720, it is located on the banks of the San Antonio River a few miles to the south of another rather well known earlier mission and a very historic site - the Alamo.

Mission San José was the largest of the missions in the area. At its height, it was a community in which about 350 Native Americans resided, sustained by extensive fields and herds of livestock. Viewed as the model among the Texas missions, San José gained a reputation as a major social and cultural center.

In fact it became known as the "Queen of the Missions" with its imposing complex of stone walls, bastions, a granary, and magnificent church.

What is so unique is that this site is both a National Park and an active Catholic parish, part of the Archdiocese of San Antonio.

After 10:30 Mass, we were able to catch up with a familiar figure to most of you – Deacon George Wunderlich who after relocating to that area is now one of the assigned deacons at Mission San Jose. To be an historian – as George is - and a deacon – I can't think of a better place to be. He and Irene send their best wishes to all of you.

Of course the word "mission" has different meanings. We have been hearing a lot from the pulpit about our "mission" to go make disciples. The life of our parish and pastorate must be about mission not maintenance!

After our 50 days of the Easter Season and two solemnities – Holy Trinity and Corpus Christi, today's Gospel takes us into the middle of Jesus' discourse about mission, which covers most of Chapter 10 of Matthew's gospel.

Jesus is sending the apostles out to preach the coming of the kingdom of heaven in word and deed.

In the verses before the ones we heard today, Jesus commissions the apostles and tells them to travel light and to become part of the communities they visit. Then, he immediately warns them about the job: he was sending them out as lambs among the wolves. He knows they will encounter resistance and even life-threatening opposition.

That is sometimes how it is with missionaries, disciples, and prophets.

Jeremiah paid a heavy price in spreading God's message.

If you know people who think they would like to be messengers on behalf of the Lord, tell them to read the Book of Jeremiah. If that doesn't cure them, nothing will.

We heard in our First Reading a part of what is known as Jeremiah's "confession or lament."

By following God's call, Jeremiah becomes an innocent victim of slander, of entrapment, and of vengeance. Even his friends, those whom he should have been able to depend upon, seem to have turned against him. He is alone, bereft of support, and attacked on every side.

But we also see in the prophet's lament a statement of profound faith. It is an acknowledgement that God has power over the circumstances of life and it is an expression of humble faith that God will come to the aid those who cry out.

The truth is that every Catholic parish whether it is 30 years old or 300 years old is a mission these days— an outpost in the midst of a culture that is largely indifferent to religion.

Today's readings call us to reconsider our Christian vocation. Each of us was baptized to share in Christ's prophetic ministry. We are all called to be missionaries – to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ in our families, work places, and in our greater society.

And we are assured today that we are not sent forth to fend for ourselves. God cares for us more than the sparrows. God knows everything there is to know about us: our fears and aversions, our thoughts and dreams.

While we cannot expect that God will swoop into our lives and rescue us from whatever causes our pain, we can rely on God's presence to be side by side with us in times of hardship.

The prophets and apostles and our ancestors in faith accepted their mission to preach the word to sometimes hardened ears. So must we.

Today we face a new challenge in Christian witnessing: living the Gospel in a public way in a time of so much apathy and sometimes even hostility. More and more, religion is pushed to the edges of the public square. It is harder and harder for religion to gain a public hearing. While there is in some parts of the world overt violence against those who practice their faith, in our own country we face the soft opposition of indifference and neglect.

This past Wednesday evening and running through our Independence Day July 4<sup>th</sup> we observe what the Catholic Bishops call a Fortnight for Freedom in which we are asked to pray for and act for a greater recognition and respect for religious freedom and for freedom of conscience in our country and in the world.

We attend Sunday Mass often thinking that it is over till next week when we return again. Of course that is not so. When Sunday liturgies are finished, our mission begins, as the Dismissal reminds us.

Franciscan priest - David Kobak – of the same order that founded Mission San Jose in San Antonio – wrote recently about giving a tour of his parish church to RCIA candidates and to children’s religious education classes. He tells them that in his opinion the most sacred part of the Church is the front door.

We are all called to pass on what we have heard and what we have experienced in this space, to those we meet out there, not necessarily in what we say, but in what we do.

Jesus insists it is now time for the gospel to be proclaimed openly and boldly.

The doors have been flung open:

- what was concealed must be revealed
- what was secret, must be made known
- what was said in darkness, but be spoken in light

We can do it. For as St Paul assures us we have the grace and the gift of Jesus Christ who overcomes all of our sins and failures. He is the comfort that will carry us through our disappointments. He is the strength that will enable us to endure the misunderstandings and hardships that comes with discipleship.

We are called to acknowledge him before the world, and we are promised that if we do, he will acknowledge us before God.