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“Know this: the kingdom of God is at hand” (Luke 10:12).

The sending out of the 72 disciples was perhaps the pinnacle of Jesus’ ministry. His message had been successfully passed on to missionary teams that went before him into the towns and villages of Galilee. Jesus’ instructions to them revealed the paradoxical nature of his mission. It is a lesson eventually learned by every parish mission trip or church service project, that it is not what you bring but what you discover already present in the mutual reciprocity of God’s grace at work in every faith encounter that makes the moment happen.

Jesus prepared his disciples to announce the Good News by stripping them of all their resources. The disciples were to set out without provisions, money, food, extra clothing, or even sandals. In some versions of the story, they have no walking sticks,

a form of self-protection. In other words, they went helpless and needy among strangers, bearing only the gift of his peace to any house that opened its doors and showed them hospitality.

When receptivity met their message, miracles of liberation, reconciliation and healing occurred. The disciples must have gone out with trepidation and uncertainty, but they came back overflowing with wonder and joy. Everyone had experienced the presence and power of God.

St. Francis of Assisi embraced poverty as the secret of evangelization. The witness of his little brothers not only contrasted with the opulence of the official church, but they conveyed the joyful freedom of those who travel light, knowing God always cares for those who are faithful to the mission.

Isaiah's song of God's abundance captures the security of believers who feel like an infant at the breast, dandled on their mother's knees. God's love is the ultimate dream of the human heart, and knowing it is assured is like coming home, even in the midst of life's trials and contradictions. Your names are already written in heaven.

St. Paul began his ministry self-assured because of his theological training and credentials, only to learn that he was strongest when he was weak. In his letter to the Galatians, he alludes to his daily experience of Christ's crucifixion as the source of his confidence: "I bear the marks of Jesus on my body" (Gal 6:17). Humbled by his conversion, humiliated by his failure to impress the Greeks in Athens, he then boasted only of his setbacks and sufferings as sure signs of God's power at work in his ministry.

The Kingdom of God is at hand wherever disciples are taking the Gospel to the margins, whether this is among strangers or within their own families and communities. Often the hardest threshold to cross is the one that carries us out of ourselves into the adventure of traveling light and trusting in the Spirit. It is not our brilliance or strength, but our shared doubts and our wounds that link us to others on the same road. This is where real evangelization can happen for everyone, especially us, if we are open to receive what we think we are giving to others.

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