

July 7, 2019
Fourteenth Sunday of Ordinary Time

Every time I hear Jesus's words, *the harvest is rich and the laborers are few; so ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest* my memory goes back to sixth grade when my aunt read this gospel verse to us in our Wednesday afternoon Faith Formation class. When I heard those words, I thought, *maybe Jesus wants me to be a priest*. I knew that my life would be different at that moment. I took a step that day, a step from being a disciple to becoming a missionary disciple.

How do we move from being disciples to being missionary disciples? What does it mean to be a missionary disciple? Before we can be a missionary disciple, we need to become a disciple, one who has made the decision to follow Jesus. It begins with knowing what Jesus has done for us. We get a glimpse of that from the book of the prophet Isaiah. We read from the 66th chapter of Isaiah, the part of Isaiah that celebrates the victory of God for his people, in this case, the power of God that led the Israelites out of captivity in Babylon back to the Promised Land. They are home, the great city of Jerusalem is restored, the city set on a hill, the city that represents the covenant that God has made with his people. Isaiah compares this return to an infant, who is desperately hungry and then suckles at the abundant breasts of his or her mother. Think of the piercing cry of a hungry baby and then the satisfying groans of comfort that baby makes when at last, the little one is drinking of the milk that flows from the

mother's side. When we know how lost we once were and the comfort of being found, we know that God's love is much like a mother's love who gives comforting food to her child.

I discovered that love when I was a teenager, going through self-doubt and depression. I discovered God in the beauty of nature, I heard Jesus speaking to my adolescent confusion, comforting me with the warm milk of a mother's love. When we discover the personal love of God for us through his Son Jesus, it makes all the difference. It is what St. Paul calls in his letter to the Galatians today, being a "new creation." When we know God's personal love for us at a deep level, we will live in a new way, motivated to both live in God's love and share that love with others.

Jesus understood well the personal love of his heavenly Father. For this reason, he sent out his disciples two by two; two friends to go the towns that he intended to visit, so that they could make friends before he actually arrived. The first step of a missionary disciple is to foster community. Stay in one place and eat what people offered you. That is, don't go broad, go deep. This means being with people as persons, as friends caring for their personal needs. That is what Jesus means when he tells his disciples to cure the sick. In whatever way we care for people in their time of need, we bring them the love of Christ. When we are bringing the love of Christ to others, we need to be open to the possibility of speaking about Jesus to others who might not yet know his love. That is clearly the why Jesus sends his disciples. We don't try impose our belief on

others, rather we look for opportunities to propose to them the power of God's love that we have come to know in Jesus Christ and his Church.