

Weekly Gospel Readings

The 1st Sunday of Epep

Jesus Sends Out the Seventy-Two

On this Sunday (07/09/23), the First Sunday of the blessed month of Epep and the final Sunday of the Apostles Fast, the Church reads [Luke 10:1-20](#). In this reading, Christ provides instructions to the seventy apostles on how to preach to the Gentiles (those not of the Jewish faith). Christ describes how service is not easy, how we need to support each other to serve effectively, and how God supports all of our service efforts.

When preparing the apostles for their mission of preaching to the Gentiles, Christ tells them, “Go your way; behold, I send you out as lambs among wolves” ([Luke 10:3](#)). By saying this, Christ is not trying to scare the apostles from their service; rather, he is emphasizing that serving others is not always easy and warning them of the trials and tribulations they may face. As St. Augustine beautifully explains, “By devouring the lambs, wolves turn into lambs, through the meekness of His lambs, namely His apostles, which is the goal of this mission.” In order to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles, the apostles need to give of themselves, and through this giving, others will be saved. In a similar way, when we serve others, we need to realize that “His mission is not an easy one, a way paved with roses...” (Father Tadros Malaty).

However, despite the difficulties we may face, God always ensures that we have the support we need. In His wisdom, Christ sends out the apostles two by two, ensuring that each apostle has a partner in service. As explained in the Book of Ecclesiastes, “Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up!” ([Ecclesiastes 4:9-10](#)). Thus, it is necessary to work with and depend on others to help with service. It is impossible to serve without help effectively and efficiently from others—even the Apostles needed partners in order to serve the Gentiles!

Moreover, God promises to strengthen us in our services. As Christ explains to the Apostles, “Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you” ([Luke 10:19](#)). We are all in one Body of Christ, and He supports us in all of our services, no matter how small or large it may seem. As St. Augustine explains, “It is far better for you to be just a finger in the body, than to be an eye outside the body.”

Lord, let us always remember that we need Your love and support in all of our services. We ask you to continue to support us and motivate us to serve others with all our hearts, minds, and bodies. Amen.

Sources:

- Bible, English Standard Version
- Commentaries on the Gospel of St. Luke by Father Tadros Malaty