

Fr. Romeo Homily
July 7, 2019
14th Sunday in Ordinary Time (C)

We all know the proverb “actions speak louder than words”. It means simply this: our actions (what we do) communicate more clearly than our words. And so, if we want people to believe our words, we should “speak” with our actions.

When Jesus commissioned the seventy-two disciples, the task they are given is more about what they should do to the people. The most important message the seventy-two are to deliver is one sentence, “The reign of God is at hand”. Perhaps Jesus did tell them in detail what should be the themes of their sermons, but Luke and the other evangelists mention none of it here, and we are left to suppose that Jesus did not insist much on the content of their preaching.

On the other hand—and this is the surprising thing—he insists very much on their behavior. First, they are to pray, ‘Ask the harvest-master to send workers to his harvest’. Second, they must act with innocence, candor, and direct honesty, never having recourse to trickery or deceit of any kind. That is what Jesus means when he says, “I am sending you as lamb in the midst of wolves”. His missionaries must be defenseless before hostile people. Third, the disciples must travel light and not be cluttered up with material things. That their priorities lay in the things of God. Four, they are not to waste time in idle chatter – which advice is given under the form of the stark injunction, “greet no one along the way”. This is not an invitation to be impolite; it just means that the person of God should not engage in endless palavers such as marked social relationship in the Middle East at the time of Jesus. Five, the disciples are not to look around for more comfortable lodgings once they are settled in. They must avoid sponging on people. Their mission is not to get but to give. Six, they are to perform cures and cast out demons. These actions will speak louder than words and will demonstrate better than sermons that the reign of God is indeed at hand. In short, these instructions of Jesus insist little on what the missionaries should say, but they insist a lot on what the

missionaries should do. Their lifestyle and behavior will speak louder than anything they can say. Example my own experience.....people will not remember what you've said to them, but on how you treat them.

We are the successors of the seventy-two disciples, for we too, are sent to the world as Christ's representatives. And the moment people learn that we publicly profess being Christians, they will observe how we behave. Our actions will always speak louder than our words. Nobody likes long sermons, nobody likes to be lectured at or preached to. On the other hand, people will watch to see if we practice what we preach: are we honest, dependable, generous, courteous, modest, kind, understanding, ready to lend a hand, faithful to our word, and so on? If people find us to be all that, then perhaps they will begin to believe that God's rule is indeed not far from them, since God is already ruling in our lives. "Don't only speak about the message, but be the message".