

For Sunday, July 3, 2016

## Laborers for the Harvest

14th Sunday in Ordinary Time

<http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/070316.cfm>

Isaiah 66:10-14c

Galatians 6:14-18

Luke 10:1-12, 17-20 or 10:1-9

In workshops, retreats, and classes I've offered over the years to parish and diocesan groups around the country, I'm consistently struck by the tension that many people feel between spirituality (which they often think of as something private) and action (which is, of course, more public). People can be hesitant to talk about how they pray. It's much easier to talk about what we *do*—how we minister and the ways we serve.

But, as the Letter to the Galatians has been reminding us over the course of the past several weeks, we risk losing something essential if we focus too much of our energy on actions (i.e., observing "the law") and neglect the deeper and more important spiritual realities that should be the foundation for everything we do in life, including our works of mercy and justice.

So, how can begin to bring together our personal spirituality and our more public works? I think this Sunday's Gospel provides us an important insight: the quality of our relationships.

This might seem like an odd answer, given the emphasis on mission and vocation in this Sunday's Gospel passage, but let's consider what Jesus instructs his disciples to do. He sends them out *in pairs* to "every town and place he intended to visit." These disciples were to let the local communities know that Jesus and the Apostles were on their way. They were being asked to evangelize—to announce the good news that Jesus was coming. (Remember that our word "evangelize" comes from the Greek word *evangelion*, which originally meant a joyful announcement that a king was coming to visit or that a military battle had been won.) And the message, the *evangelion*, that Jesus had instructed the disciples to proclaim was simple: "The kingdom of God is at hand for you." Here. Now.

The disciples' journey and their announcement of the coming of the kingdom—and of the King himself—was the action. But what was bubbling beneath the surface, within the hearts and souls of those early evangelizers? It was their own faith in and relationship with Jesus *and* with one another.

When Jesus sent out the disciples as "laborers for his harvest," he wanted them to work together, to share their faith, support and encourage one another when the journey was difficult, and to witness to the fact that to be a disciple of Jesus calls for collaboration and community. But Jesus also instructed them to pay attention to the response of the people they were visiting. They weren't to just ride into town like



gunslingers in a cowboy movie. They were to share their message about the coming of the kingdom but also to watch and listen—to be in relationship with the people they visited. As one commentator observed, “Whether accepted or rejected, disciples ‘harvest the ‘kingdom of God’ by their very presence, by their very proclamation of Jesus’ name, by their very fidelity to Jesus’ mission” (from *Living Liturgy 2016*).

Their mission was to proclaim the faith they held within their hearts and invite others—all others—to join them in building up God’s kingdom as faithful disciples. Faith and action came together in relationships—the communion and community of the kingdom of God.

As we reflect on the quality of our own relationships, we can certainly also think about the community of our nation as we look forward to our Independence Day celebrations on the Fourth of July. The Founding Fathers and first parents of this country envisioned the United States as a nation where all people were equal (cf. the [Declaration of Independence](#)) and where essential rights and freedoms were available to all people without fear of retribution or retaliation. America was built upon a belief in the necessity of right relationships and the responsible practice of freedom for the good of all our people.

As Christians—disciples proclaiming our interior faith through our public works of mercy and justice—we are being invited to reflect on how we are helping build God’s kingdom within our families, parishes, communities, and country. How are we building relationships with others? How does our faith form and inform our relationships? Who are we inviting? Who might we be excluding?

*Silas S. Henderson, MTS*

## PRAYER

God of justice, Father of truth,  
who guide creation in wisdom and goodness  
to fulfillment in Christ your Son,  
open our hearts to the truth of his Gospel,  
that your peace may rule in our hearts  
and your justice guide our lives.  
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,  
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, for ever and ever.

—Collect from the Mass for Independence Day from the English translation of The Roman Missal © 2010,  
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# NOTICES

## 2016 CHURCH NETWORK CONFERENCE, July 6-9, Nashville

The Church Network's sixtieth annual conference, "Serving at Sixty," is an engaging, thought-provoking three-day event offering you multiple ways to network with church leaders, find a mentor, get a sneak preview of emerging technology, and hone your skills. You'll have opportunities to get started on certification requirements and to participate in continuing education. To learn more and to register click [here](#).

## REMEMBERING OUR BROTHERS & SISTERS IN ORLANDO

In light of the tragic events that took place in Orlando, Liturgical Publications is making available free artwork to encourage parishioners to remember in prayer all those affected. LPi customers can find the artwork on the Art & Media Portal. If you do not print your bulletin with LPi, click [here](#).

## FORTNIGHT FOR FREEDOM

The theme of this year's Fortnight for Freedom is Witnesses to Freedom. Each year dioceses around the country arrange special events to highlight the importance of defending religious freedom. The Fortnight for Freedom is from June 21—the vigil of the feasts of St. John Fisher and St. Thomas More—to July 4, Independence Day. For more information and resources for your parish, click [here](#).

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