

14th Sunday of Ordinary Time Missionary Discipleship 2020
Fr. Frank Schuster

My friends, it is the 14th Sunday of Ordinary Time and we are also celebrating the 4th of July this weekend. Our country has been doing a lot of soul searching as of late as to what it means to be a citizen of this country. As I reflect on the debate that is being had in the public square about our nation's history, some of it very good and some of it very bad, the inscription on the base of the Statue of Liberty came to mind as perhaps a good starting point for that conversation. You remember, don't you, what is written at the base of the Statue of Liberty? At the base there is an inscription, "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses, yearning to breathe free, the wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, tempest tossed, to me: I lift my lamp beside the golden door." Compare these words with what Jesus says today, "Come to me all you who are weary and find life burdensome and I will give you rest."

Three years ago I was with a delegation from the Archdiocese of Seattle in Orlando for the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Convocation on Catholic Leadership. The purpose of this convocation was to answer Pope Francis' challenge that he gave the world in his exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, The Joy of the Gospel. Central to Pope Francis' hope articulated in the exhortation is that all the baptized take on the challenge to become what he calls missionary disciples. Missionary disciples are followers of Jesus who marked by the joy of the Gospel seek out those living on the peripheries of society and accompany them, welcoming them into the Body of Christ. I mention this because in our Gospel reading today Jesus sets the example of what missionary discipleship looks like. As an aside, I wonder what it would look like if we had a few less angry words thrown around in our country and a little more missionary discipleship, how much better this holiday would be right now.

My friends, who are the people we need to reach out to who live on the peripheries so to share the joy of the Gospel? It could be those experiencing homelessness. It could be the elderly in nursing homes who no one can visit them right now except health care workers. Because of Covid-19, a lot of them only a telephone to visit with friends and family right now. Whoever it is that we need to reach out to right now, it is the little things that we can do each day, done with great love, that matter. We are all called to get out of our comfort zone, become more interested in the lives of the people around us who are struggling in our families, in our neighborhoods, the shut-ins, the immigrant, the list goes on.

This is why I believe that, as our country continues to soul search right now, the inscription at the base of the Statue of Liberty feels like a good starting point. "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses, yearning to breathe free, the wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, tempest tossed, to me: I lift my lamp beside the golden door." This coming week,

we are invited to translate these words into action as followers of Jesus who invites everyone in our Gospel reading, “Come to me all you who are weary and find life burdensome and I will give you rest.”