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.”