

To glory in the cross of Christ?

A bit strange, no?

Kind of like to glory in the electric chair

That is what the cross was

It was more than just a way for the state to execute someone

It was a gruesome, violent way to die

The most humiliating way for the state to do this

It was meant to keep others from following suit

Why does St Paul call us to glory in this?

We have to recall his entire statement

He is not calling us to glory in the cross alone

Christians are not masochists

He is calling us to glory in the cross of Christ

Christ gives the cross new meaning

It is really this understanding of the cross that sets Christianity apart

This is what it is to be a disciple of Christ

It is not about the suffering

It is about what it means

It is a sign of discipleship

A sign we have been called

A sign we have been sent on a special mission

And that we understand this

This is foretold by the prophets

Our reading from Isaiah speaks of a Jerusalem in ruins

But it will not remain in ruins

God Himself watches over them

Like a mother looking upon her newborn child

God will look upon his Chosen People

He will comfort them in their sorrow

He will offer abundant blessings upon them

The people of Jerusalem see tribulations as punishment from God

God sees them as opportunities to call them to repent

To return to Him

So he can give them what they need to live

So He can give them Himself

Our second reading is from the Letter of St Paul to the Galatians

It is in this letter that St Paul opens our hearts to a new understanding

Many people in his time looked at suffering as the ancients did

As a punishment

But Paul tells them that he glories in the cross of Christ

This is what gives Christian's their identity

It is not in external signs such as circumcision

It is not in external following the law

It is not about being male or female

Greek or Jew

Before Christ, the cross was a sign of death

Now it becomes a passage way to life

What the world values are not what God values

The death and resurrection of Christ turned the natural world-view upside down

The mission of the seventy-two reflect this as well

They are sent by Christ

No money belt

No sack

No extra sandals

Greet no one on the way

These are things the world tells us are important

But Christ instructs them to accept the hospitality of their hosts

And to offer peace to that household

This peace is more than the traditional greeting mf Shalom

This is a peace of heart

The peace he will gain for us on the cross

A peace that is not dependent on external things

And if they are rejected, they are to shake to dust from their feet

When the Israelites traveled from the Holy Land

Walking through pagan lands, they would get dirty and dusty

When they returned to the Holy Land

They would remove their sandals

And shake the dust off

Symbolizing they were to separate themselves from the pagans

There was a difference between those living under God's covenant

And those outside of it

For the followers of Christ to shake the dust from their feet

Was a statement that the covenant was offered

And was rejected

Those who do not accept Christ are considered pagan territory

Even with this, the seventy-two did not grasp what was happening

They returned

Boasting of all that happened

The human authority went to their heads

Something we all have to be aware of

Jesus tells them to look beyond this world

Yes, they are to rejoice

But to rejoice that their names are written in the Book of Life

Again, a new way to look at our lives

Our readings have an important message for the world today

First, God will watch over His children

As He did at the time of Isaiah

As He did for the Galatians

As He continues to do today

There is also a message our Holy Father is calling us to notice

And to live

It is a message of simplifying our lives

And ordering them in the right way

Who were these 72?

The 12 Apostles were not a part of this group

Other than this short passage, they are not mentioned in any of the Gospels, and none of them are named

Our Christian lives are not about fame

This is not a guarantee of success

One way to see them is as representatives for all ages

They were sent

We are sent

They had a specific mission

As each of us has a specific mission

Jesus gave them instructions

Simplify

We need to hear this, especially today

It is so easy to accumulate things

Materially and spiritually

Thinking that these things will buy happiness

Thinking things will buy security for me or my family

Thinking these will ensure our salvation

But these things can entrap us

We can even become enslaved to them

It is good to let go of things occasionally

So we can focus on what is important

Faith, family and friendship

We can also get caught up spiritually

We can have so many devotions we forget to pray

**Our spiritual lives can become as complicated and cluttered as
our material life**

We lose sight of the cross

We can become distracted by others around us

**This is why it is good to have crucifixes in our homes and churches
To bring our lives into focus**

**A teacher was trying to get a group of students ready for 1st
Communion**

They were walking all over the place

Trying to follow the one directly in front of them

So she stopped and told them

When you are going up

Look at the cross and you will be OK

We sometimes need this advice

Just look at the cross, and we will be OK

Because this is the key

When we see life through the cross

It all comes into proper focus and perspective

It is not about doing everything

It is about being faithful and doing what we do well

A spiritual writer once said

In the spiritual life we grow not by addition but by subtraction

This is true in our material life as well

Simplify materially and spiritually

Focusing on what truly matters; faith, family and friendship

Focusing on the cross of Christ