

In the Name of the Father, Son & Holy Spirit, Amen.

To appreciate our three-verse Gospel lesson, we need to know the context. In this chapter, Jesus summons the twelve disciples and gives them healing powers and authority over unclean spirits.

He then gives them their marching orders. He warns that they will face persecution. He tells them not to fear the person who can kill the body, but rather to fear God who has power over body and soul.

He assures them of God's love. He promises to acknowledge before the Father anyone who acknowledges Jesus before people, and warns that he has not come to bring peace, but a sword.

Matthew, of course, is not only recalling Jesus' instructions to his first disciples; he is also speaking to his own community of disciples a few generations later.

That time in history, is the same for our time in history. For there is still a need to send out laborers into the harvest, to take the Gospel message beyond our communities. We do not carry out our task in the same way, however, the message we carry to others is the same.

In today's three sentence gospel reading, Jesus uses what's called a hypothetical syllogism. The logical form of the argument is:

**If A then B; if B then C; therefore, if A then C.**

He doesn't state the conclusion. Maybe He wanted His hearers to draw it for themselves or maybe Matthew shortened the account. It doesn't really matter. It's a straightforward argument: **"He who receives you receives me, and he who receives me, receives the one who sent me.**

The word **sent** is important. Jesus sends his disciples. Matthew rightly assumes that the church is a '**sent**' church. There is simply no other way to be the church. Today, there is a growing awareness that being **sent** is not just a program of the church; it is (or ought to be) the defining purpose of everything the church does.

But that's not to say we are all sent to be wandering missionaries, depending on others for shelter and sustenance, but that doesn't mean we are off the hook. We are the baptized. We embody the good news. We bear witness to Christ by the way we live our lives; by our humility and vulnerability. By our care for others. The list goes on and on.

It seems to me, for some reason, we tend to make things more complicated than they need to be. Jesus had a way of cutting through all the hypocrisy and trivia and nonsense.

He said that true holiness is about loving God and loving others—all others, no exceptions. He said that true spirituality is about embracing a child, caring for the weak and outcast.

He said that true goodness is about feeding the hungry person, visiting the sick, and being a companion to those who are in prison. It seems that for Jesus, a truly spiritual way of living is about being willing to give someone a cup of cold water on a hot day.

It doesn't seem to be more complicated than that. No elaborate systems, no obsessions with keeping every jot and tittle. At the end of the day, it's about having a heart that is willing to give to others the same grace, and mercy, and unconditional love that we have received.

The whole concept of hospitality in this gospel is a surrogate for Christian charity. The hospitality we offer is not an hospitality we receive or anticipate receiving from others. Christian charity doesn't work that way. It's not transactional. And it is not selective. It is a witness to the unconditional love of Christ.

It is not reserved for family and friends alone; it means outreach to all and especially the least among us as Christ calls them in this gospel: these little ones. That's the theory but what about the practice?

David Seville, in his commentary, says that sadly the world is not awash with Mother Teresa's. He says most people only see poor people on television and promptly change the channel. But despite cynicism, hope survives.

Christ's love is alive. It is all around us. We have many proven, practical ways to follow Christ's command. There are parish outreach programs, food banks, discretionary funds, provision of community meals. Our Churches have opened their doors to those suffering from addictions. AA and its offshoots rely on Church hospitality. Refugees are supported, their needs met through the generosity of Parishes.

These are the basics of Christian hospitality, no surprises, nothing fancy, just an active awareness all these little ones are our guests of honour; the honour of Christ for we bear the presence of Christ to every person we encounter, in every home, workplace, or neighborhood we enter. Thanks be to God, Amen.