

**Homily**  
**14<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter - C**

Rev. Peter G. Jankowski  
July 02-03, 2022

Is 66: 10-14  
Ps 66: 1-3, 4-5, 6-7, 16-20  
Gal 6: 14-18  
Lk 10: 1-12

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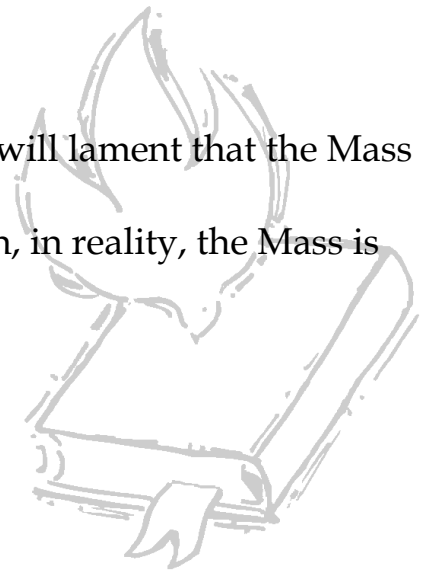


*Inspired by **Sesame Street**: This homily is brought to you by the number 72 and the letter "Z" (as in zzzzzzz...).*

*Inspirado en **Plaza Sésamo**: esta homilía es presentada por el número 72 y la letra "Z" ("zeta" – como en zzzzzzz ...)*

Whenever we cross paths with a set of readings every three years, each of us is supposed to be reminded and challenged by the texts we read over and over. We need to find a way to find something in these texts that stir us in the way we live our lives, symbolism with which we can associate so that when we leave this Mass, we do not forget about the message that we have received but keep reminding ourselves as to the importance of these biblical messages.

Sometimes this task is difficult – many folks will lament that the Mass is nothing more than “the same old thing” when, in reality, the Mass is



the most important “thing” we do in our faith lives, “the source and summit of our Christian life” (Lumen Gentium #11, CCC #1324).

So how am I to make these readings from the 14<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary time (one set of Ordinary Times in this Lukan Cycle of thirty-four weeks) unique enough that we are going to remember what the texts have to say in a way that we all are going to remember the meaning of this particular weekend’s readings? My attempt to emphasize these readings will focus on one symbol that hopefully will have meaning to all of us by the end of our time together – the number *seventy-two*.

To be honest with you, establishing a symbolism for the number “seventy-two” is a stretch, even in reference to the bible. In the secular world, all kinds of trivial references to the number “seventy-two” can be found, whether it be Joey Chestnut winning the Nathan’s Famous 2017 Hot Dog eating contest by eating seventy-two hot dogs. In the world of math, seventy-two is the sum of four consecutive primes ( $13 + 17 + 19 + 23$ ), as well as the sum of six consecutive primes ( $5 + 7 + 11 + 13 + 17 +$

19). The product of 8 and 9, seventy-two is a “pronic” number, according to Aristotle (whatever that means). In a comfortably heated or air-conditioned room, 72° is considered an ideal room temperature for living. In politics, the number seventy-two is associated with the number of members in the Senate of Argentina.

In the world of sports, the number seventy-two with Football Hall of Famers Ray Neitzke or Dan Dierdorf, the par score for eighteen holes of golf or even the number of wins that the Chicago Bulls Basketball team achieved in 1995-96, a record that was held until the Golden State Warriors broke it in 2015-16 (but who cares about the Golden State Warriors?).

When I gave this homily on Saturday night, I was chided by parishioners because I did not mention other famous “72s” in the world of sports, such as football players William “The Fridge” Perry, Ed “Too Tall” Jones or the Chicago White Sox baseball player Carlton Fisk. I responded by saying that Perry and Jones are *not* in the Hall of Fame

and Carlton Fisk played for the White Sox and no one cares about them...

In the world of the really bizarre, someone also on Saturday night spoke to me of the number "72" in reference to astronomy and astrology. They directed me to a website that stated...

The 72 emanations of God expressed in ancient texts, therefore, refer to 72 subtle energies, or qualities, that exist throughout the Universe. And therefore within the human body and that we are all really made of stardust.

In astrology, there are 72 angels that each correspond to a sign of the zodiac. Jacob's ladder on which the angels ascend and descend has 72 steps.

Las 72 emanaciones de Dios expresadas en textos antiguos, por lo tanto, se refieren a 72 energías o cualidades sutiles que existen en todo el Universo. Y, por lo tanto, dentro del cuerpo humano y que todos estamos realmente hechos de polvo de estrellas.

En astrología, hay 72 ángeles que corresponden a un signo del zodiaco. La escalera de Jacob en la que ascienden y descienden los ángeles tiene 72 escalones.

All of this said, at least I was assured that folks were listening to the symbolism I offered in this homily; I thought that the folks may not connect the message of the symbol with what I was trying to convey but at least they had the image of “72” lodged in their thought process.

Concerning apocryphal scriptures, the passage from the 58<sup>th</sup> verse of the non-canonical gospel of Thomas describes how the child Jesus “went into the dye works of Levi. He took seventy-two different colors and threw them into the vat. He took them out all white. And he said, “Even so has the Son of Man come as a dyer.”

In the canonical scriptures, the number “72” is mentioned four specific times. Three times the number specifically is mentioned in the Old Testament: seventy-two races descend from the progeny of Noah (according to Genesis 10), the seventy-two languages spoken at the Tower of Babel and the Spirit outpouring in Nb 11 to seventy men who accompanied Moses or whether two additional men who were not with Moses should be included (Eldad and Medad). Some scripture scholars question whether the numbers referenced in the Noah and the Moses

stories to be seventy, *not* seventy-two. Even the number of authors who translated the Old Testament from Hebrew to Greek (called the *Septuagint*) is questioned by some scholars – some say that seventy men were involved in the translation while others say the number was seventy-two.

What I am trying to say is that outside of a category on *Jeopardy!*, the number seventy-two has questionable value in faith life that we live. Even in the Jerome Biblical Commentary, the scholars interpreting the importance of the number seventy-two declare that the entire discussion of the importance of this particular number is one of “fancy,” not really important in the life of faith.

The focus of my homily is on the importance that the number “72” plays in today’s gospel. Why do I consider this so important when the number’s meaning has questionable value? How do I get the pew-sitting faithful to connect this symbol to a gospel that we read in all three synoptic (or similar) gospels – from Mt 10:1–4, Mk 3: 13–19 and *twice* in Luke’s gospel – once to “the twelve” in Chapter Six (12-16) and then to

the seventy-two in the gospel passage we just read in Chapter Ten (1-12)?

The question we must ask today is why the author of Luke's gospel chooses to repeat this commissioning story, not just to the twelve chosen men closest to Jesus but to seventy-two disciples also walking on this journey. Luke's author is the only one who repeats this story. At least to my way of reflection, one theory about this duplication is that Jesus chooses to extend his mission "to the ends of the earth" according to the Lukan author which is the goal of evangelization. As St. John Chrysostom once wrote,

There is nothing colder than a Christian who is not concerned about the salvation of others... Do not say, I cannot help others: for, if you are truly a Christian it is impossible not to... If we behave in the correct way, everything else will follow as a natural consequence. The light of Christians cannot be hidden, a lamp shining so brightly cannot be hidden.

No hay nada más frío que un cristiano que no se preocupa por la salvación de los demás ... No digas, no puedo ayudar a los demás: porque, si eres verdaderamente cristiano, es imposible no ... Si nos comportamos de la manera correcta, todo lo demás Seguirá como una

consecuencia natural. La luz de los cristianos no puede ocultarse, una lámpara que brilla con tanta intensidad no puede ocultarse.

At least to me, if the commissioning of the twelve was directed to the apostles directly selected by the Lord for a specific ministry (and subsequent to the apostles, their successors – the bishops), perhaps the second story of the seventy-two refers to the rest of us, the sowers of the field or the evangelists of the world. If we understand what our Lord is instructing our disciples to do in today's gospel, then we realize that this mission is not limited just to his apostles or their successors, the bishops. Jesus is extending this mission out to all of us, whom these seventy-two disciples represent. To bring the message of Christ from home to home is a mission for each and every one of us, since all of us are commissioned to live like Christ and to carry this mission into every home we visit, into every life we encounter. As a mother cares for her infant from the first reading today, as a humble soul finds strength in the sacrifice of carrying forth this message from our second reading, we all must be resolute to *become* the seventy-two in today's age, to give



meaning to a number that might not have much significant meaning in today's age.

*We are the seventy-two* of today's generation. We may not seem significant and we all must overcome the obstacles that we face from the evils that confront us, both inside the Church and certainly without. God offers us the ability to make significant that which others do not seem as important. We can walk out of this Mass and discard a seemingly insignificant number or possibly a message from ordinary time that gets lost from all the other messages we hear or... we can walk out of this Mass and make as much of a difference to those in the world as the disciples were able to do in the first century.

I found a series of quotes from a Lifeteen website associated to Pope St. John Paul II that very much reflect the sentiment and meaning of what I am trying to emphasize in today's readings. If my words have little value, maybe the words of our Holy Father can emphasize this message better. I would like to conclude my homily with the words of this saintly Holy Father for inspiration. He writes...

Christ is asking each of you... (how) do you love Me? He is not asking you whether you know how to speak to crowds, whether you can direct an organization or manage an estate. He is asking you to love Him. All the rest will ensue.

... It is first of all necessary for you young people to give a forceful witness of love for life, God's gift. This love must extend from the beginning to the end of every life and must struggle against every attempt to make man the arbiter of his brother's life, of unborn life, of life that is waning or that of the handicapped and the weak.

... Love of Christ does not distract us from interest in others, but rather invites us to responsibility for them, to the exclusion of no one...

... Remember that you are never alone, Christ is with you on your journey every day of your lives! He has called you and chosen you to live in the freedom of the children of God. Turn to Him in prayer and in love. Ask Him to grant you the courage and strength to live in this freedom always. Walk with Him who is 'the Way, the Truth and the Life.'

... Dear friends, if you learn to discover Jesus in the Eucharist, you will also know how to discover Him in your brothers and sisters, particularly the very poor.

Hoy Cristo les pregunta a cada uno de ustedes ... (¿cómo) me aman? Él no le está preguntando si sabe cómo hablarle a las multitudes, si puede dirigir una organización o administrar un patrimonio. Te está pidiendo que lo ames. Todo lo demás se producirá.

... Ante todo, es necesario que ustedes, jóvenes, den un testimonio contundente de amor por la vida, el regalo de Dios. Este amor debe extenderse desde el principio hasta el final de cada vida y debe luchar contra cada intento de hacer que el hombre sea el árbitro de la vida de su hermano, de la vida por nacer, de la vida que está menguando o la de los discapacitados y los débiles.

... El amor de Cristo no nos distrae del interés en los demás, sino que nos invita a responsabilizarnos de ellos, sin excluir a nadie ...

... ¡Recuerda que nunca estás solo, Cristo está contigo en tu viaje todos los días de tu vida! Él te ha llamado y te ha elegido para vivir en la libertad de los hijos de Dios. Acude a Él en oración y en amor. Pídale que le conceda el coraje y la fuerza para vivir en esta libertad siempre. Camina con Aquel que es “el Camino, la Verdad y la Vida.”

... Queridos amigos, si aprenden a descubrir a Jesús en la Eucaristía, también sabrán cómo descubrirlo en sus hermanos y hermanas, especialmente en los muy pobres.

May we follow the direction the Lord sets before us – may we follow the example of the seventy-two in the manner we spread this gospel message in the homes that we enter. This is our prayer.