

JANUARY 26, 2026 FATHER FRANCIS SALASAR

A Sunday school teacher once asked her class, “Why did Jesus send disciples two by two?” A little boy raised his hand and confidently answered, “So one could drive... and the other could read the map!”

We laughed, but his answer carried a simple truth: we need one another on the journey. No one travels alone. And that insight opens the heart of today’s Gospel—a message that also resonates beautifully with the feast of Sts. Timothy and Titus, faithful companions and co-workers of St. Paul.

Today, Jesus sends out seventy-two disciples to the towns where He Himself would later go. These were not the Twelve apostles but ordinary believers—people without training, degrees, or special qualifications. Yet Jesus entrusts them with His mission: **“Cure the sick... and tell them, the Kingdom of God has come near.”**

This moment becomes a blueprint for Christian discipleship, outlining what it means to follow Christ and participate in His work. Let us reflect on five movements in this Gospel—five steps that shape our mission today.

First, Jesus Sends Us—Not Only the “Holy Ones”

The first thing we notice is that Jesus sends **the seventy-two**, not just the apostles. The number itself signals that the mission belongs not to a chosen elite but to the whole community of believers.

Every baptized person is sent.

Every follower of Jesus carries a mission.

Every Christian bears Christ into the world.

We often imagine a mission as something grand or dramatic—preaching to crowds or travelling to remote places. But Jesus sends His disciples into ordinary towns, everyday homes, familiar streets. He sends them precisely where life already happens.

Your mission may begin:

- in your family
- at your workplace
- among your friends
- in moments of kindness
- in words of encouragement
- in the quiet witness of integrity

The seventy-two remind us that mission is not extraordinary people doing great things, but ordinary people doing small things with extraordinary love.

Secondly, Jesus Sends Them Two by Two.

Jesus pairs them off. He does not send anyone alone. Why? Because discipleship thrives in companionship. We need one another's support, correction, courage, and prayer. The Christian life was never meant to be lived in isolation.

Jesus had His friends.

Paul had Barnabas and Silas.

The saints walked with fellow saints.

In a culture that exalts individualism—"Do it yourself, live for yourself, depend only on yourself"—the Gospel offers a counter-message: **No one**

follows Christ alone. We walk together because faith is sustained, deepened, and protected when shared.

Thirdly, “The Harvest Is Great”—Jesus Sees Possibility, Not Despair

Jesus then declares, “The harvest is great.” He does not look at the world and see hopelessness or decline. He does not see dry soil or hardened hearts.

He sees:

- potential, not problems
- opportunity, not obstacles
- beauty ready to be gathered

In our time, many worry about declining faith, shifting values, or cultural challenges. And yes, these concerns are real. But Jesus’ words remain true: **the harvest is still abundant.**

People are longing for meaning.

Families searching for stability.

Hearts are thirsty for peace.

Souls, yearning for hope.

The issue is not the absence of harvest, but the need for more laborers willing to step into the fields with trust and generosity.

Fourthly, Jesus instructs, “Travel Light”—Mission Requires Freedom and Reliance on God

He gives unusual instructions: **carry no purse, no bag, no sandals.**

Imagine trying to travel like that! Most of us need three pairs of shoes just for a weekend.

But Jesus is not giving packing advice—He is teaching spiritual freedom.

The less we cling to, the more we can trust. The lighter we travel, the more room God has to work.

By sending His disciples with nothing, Jesus invites them into radical dependence:

- No purse means no financial security
- No bag means no backup plan
- No sandals could even symbolize humility and vulnerability

In other words, the Gospel is carried most effectively not by those who rely on their own resources but by those who rely on God. When we travel lightly—with openness, humility, and trust—miracles unfold in the simplest encounters: the welcome of a stranger, the peace of a shared table, the generosity of a humble home.

Finally, Jesus gives His disciples two essential tasks: **heal** and **proclaim**.

Healing comes first. It includes compassion, tenderness, and concrete acts of service. The Kingdom of God touches wounds before it instructs minds. A faith that does not heal is not yet the faith of Jesus.

Then comes the proclamation: **“The Kingdom of God has come near to you.”**

Mission always holds these two together: mercy and message, compassion and truth, action and announcement.

If we heal without proclaiming, people may feel loved but not know the source.

If we proclaim without healing, our words may sound empty or harsh. Christ sends us to do both.

So, dear brothers and sisters, today's Scripture—and the feast of Timothy and Titus—invites us to see ourselves among the seventy-two. We are sent by Christ into the world to be witnesses. We are called to walk with others, not alone. We are invited to trust more in God than in our own resources. We are reminded that the harvest is still plentiful and that hearts are still ready.

Most of all, we recognize that mission is not an extraordinary responsibility given to extraordinary people; it is the ordinary calling of ordinary believers entrusted with the mission of an extraordinary God.

May we go forth, then—with simplicity, with courage, and with companions—ready to heal, ready to proclaim, and ready to bring the nearness of God to everyone we meet.