

You are a disciple of Jesus just like first twelve

written by Bishop Anthony B. Taylor |

If I were to ask you who Jesus is, you'd say he's the Son of God, the second person of the Blessed Trinity, fully human and fully divine, the Messiah who saves us from the power of Satan, the redeemer whose death was the price of our freedom.

He rose from the dead, ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father, from whence he will come to judge the living and the dead. But until Holy Week 2,000 years ago no one knew hardly any of this. Until then, people knew Jesus only as a preacher, exorcist and healer, so when he sent his disciples out on their first mission, it was to do what he had been doing: to preach, drive out demons and heal the sick.

In today's Gospel, Mark precedes this first mission of the apostles with the story of Jesus' raising of Jairus' apparently dead daughter and his healing of a woman who had been menstruating incurably for 12 years non-stop, cures that only God could work. Can you imagine what it would be like to have a never-ending period, or what it would be like to be married to such a woman?

And healing wasn't the only issue. In Judaism, all contact with corpses and menstruating women made you unclean, which is what these healings did to Jesus — voluntarily for the dead girl and involuntarily for the perpetually menstruating woman — she touched him.

And, of course, you couldn't be holy and unclean at the same time, yet here was Jesus who was unclean a lot. Unclean also because he touched lepers and associated with unsavory characters, and then most shockingly, he sends his disciples out to do the same thing. As we will hear in other Gospel readings later this month: "They went off and preached repentance. (They) drove out many demons and they anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them."

And when they returned "they reported all they had done and taught." Luke reports that there was then a later mission of 72 disciples prior to that first Holy Week, and then after Pentecost, we see Peter, Paul and the others doing the very same things in the Acts of the Apostles — healings and exorcisms that only God could do, preaching the Good News with courage and wisdom that could only come from God.

Not only did they spend the rest of their lives doing what Jesus had done, most of them ended up dying a martyr's death like Jesus, so united had they become to Jesus their Savior.

You are a disciple of Jesus every bit as much as they were, and you know far more about him than they did prior to that first Holy Week, and since you have been given more and understand more than Jesus' earliest followers, you will be held to a higher standard than them.

And what God expects of you today is essentially the same as it has always been: that you preach conversion, that you proclaim the truth with courage, that you banish evil with prayer, that you cure the sick with healing love, which, in fact, are things that really only God can do,

but as we see in the Scriptures, God can and wants to do them through us.

To do so, we will sometimes find ourselves dealing with seemingly unclean people, people we find repulsive, who make us feel unclean and look unclean to others — voluntarily or involuntarily. But that's what spending the rest of our life doing what Jesus had done requires, and in so doing we too will become ever more intimately united to Jesus our Savior, already in this life and most fully in the life to come.

Bishop Anthony B. Taylor delivered this homily June 30.