

Bishop-Elect Parkes' First Homily in the Diocese of Savannah

In my opening comments today before Mass, I mentioned that I was just recently appointed to be Bishop of the Diocese of Savannah. So at this point today, this is my second day of being Bishop-Elect. I'm originally from Orlando and from New York. However, my family moved when I was in college to Orlando (Central Florida) and I would graduate from the University of South Florida.

I could go on about who I am, but frankly you can read that on the internet on the Southern Cross website. I look forward to seeing who you are and that's what I feel is my role and where my excitement is in being here in the beautiful Diocese of Savannah... to meet you, to be able to care for you, to lead you and to love. That's what the Lord calls us to do. That's what God needs us to do.

Our Gospel reading today is a follow-up to yesterday's Gospel. And there's really a (I don't think it's a coincidence. I think it is true providence). If you were at Mass yesterday or read the readings, you would have almost remembered that it was the calling of the 12 by name. It was the calling of the 12, and today is the sending of the 12. He gives them what they are to do. I feel really, very honored with these two readings on these days that I am here on my first days in Savannah because yesterday was the call for me personally. It came from Pope Francis, not a phone call like you would expect. It was more of a formal announcement. Today is the sending.

So, if I wondered in these past days, well what does a bishop do? Today I got my job description. And the Gospel is pretty clear. It says go forth. Go forth with no stick, no sandals, no walking bag, no baton, but spread the gift of mercy. Spread the gift of love, of kindness... to be able to meet people where they are at and we help bring one another to where God wants us to be. That, as a bishop in the succession of the apostles, it is that opportunity to witness, follow the Lord... that we all share in that gift of One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Faith.

Apostolic means to be sent. I feel the Lord is sending me here to Savannah in this time and in this place. But we are also by virtue of our baptism, God is asking you to be able to go forth and to proclaim the goodness of God, His mercy, His compassion and His kindness. And it is done in conjunction with the beauty of priesthood and the diaconate. It is not done alone. When Jesus sent them out, He sent them two by two. And if they had kept the faith to themselves, we wouldn't be sitting here today but we are. We are here today because they were not afraid. Because they went forth and did as Christ asked them to do.

I ask you today to reflect upon the gift of the baptismal call you received in this magnificent Cathedral of St. John the Baptist. You've received that at our baptism... to be baptized with the faith that we now proclaim to others... to receive, but also to give. I received my job description today and I hope that for each one of us as disciples, that we all know what God is asking of us.