

## FROM THE PASTOR

Dear Brothers and Sisters



Plane ticket – Check

Hotel Reservation - Check

Many will take a summer vacation within the next few weeks. Some of our parishioners are already in France, others in Poland, or Italy or Florida. Plans have been made, reservations booked, hotels confirmed.

Seventy-two of Jesus' disciples also set out on a summer trip, but they made no such plans. They took no luggage, no money, they made no reservations, they had no itinerary.

Seems crazy, right? But that is how Jesus instructed them to go.

On July 9th I will be departing for the Holy Land with one hundred youth. We will follow the footsteps of Jesus and his disciples. We'll pack light - just a carry-on bag, we'll take no cell phones, we'll take no money for souvenir shopping. We will not be tourists, but pilgrims.

Over the next couple of weeks eight thousand youth will be traveling from all over the US to the Holy Land, in groups of fifties and hundreds. We will be traveling for ten days as pilgrims in Galilee, Samaria and Judaea. We will stand on Mount Carmel, we will kneel in Bethlehem, we will pray at the Holy Sepulcher where Christ was crucified and died, we will keep vigil at the tomb of the resurrection.

The Christian population in Israel is very small, only 2% of the country's total. Part of the reason for the very small number of Christians is that the youth want to leave their Christian communities, seeking rather to come to the US.

'If only I could live in America, if only I could live in Bergen County, if only I could go to college in the States...my live would be perfect!' This is what the Christian youth in Israel think.

But there will be eight thousand youth traveling in the opposite direction. They will be bearing the announcement of the Gospel, which proclaims that our true happiness, the true meaning of our life, is not dependent on where we live. It comes from within.

Our pilgrimage will lead us to the Mount of Beatitudes, on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. We will participate in a vocational meeting, where all of the youth will be helped to discern what their vocation in life is.

All of us have a vocation - that is, a calling from God. Our vocation, and this can be said for each one of us, is to be Christian. Christianity is a gift which allows us to experience joy and happiness. This happiness is not dependent on the country or the county we live in. This happiness can be experienced even in the midst of the daily trials and difficulties of life.

The vocation to be Christian is lived out in a concrete way: the vocation to Marriage, the vocation to the Priesthood, the vocation to religious life.

As we travel to the Holy Land to discern the Vocation to Christian life, I ask for your prayers for all of the pilgrims. We will be praying for all of you and for your intentions, you will be with us on Mount Tabor, in Jerusalem, at the Dead Sea, and in the Garden of Gethsemene. Pray for us, we will pray for you.

Fr. Sean