

GOSPEL PEARLS

Kissing the priest's hands

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03_02_2022



Jesus made a tour round the villages, teaching. Then he summoned the Twelve and began to send them out in pairs giving them authority over the unclean spirits. And he instructed them to take nothing for the journey except a staff – no bread, no haversack, no coppers for their purses. They were to wear sandals but, he added, 'Do not take a spare tunic.' And he said to them, 'If you enter a house anywhere, stay there until you leave the district. And if any place does not welcome you and people refuse to listen to you, as you walk away shake off the dust from under your feet as a sign to them.' So they set off to preach repentance; and they cast

out many devils, and anointed many sick people with oil and cured them. (Mark 6, 7-13)

Jesus entrusted the proclamation of the Gospel to the apostles, sending them as people among people. The word Apostle in fact means "sent". And the Church, being apostolic, in addition to proclaiming the Gospel, was also given the task of administering the sacraments by Jesus. It mustn't be forgotten that the validity of the sacraments does not depend on the priest's degree of sanctity, but on the One who sent him, Jesus. Therefore let's try to receive the sacraments often, especially Confession and the Eucharist. And let's not use the excuse that the priest is unworthy of his task. Through him, we receive the forgiveness of sins, with absolution in confession, and the body of Christ, with transubstantiation during the consecration in the Mass. St. Francis even kissed the hands of morally unworthy priests and to those who pointed out that they were sinners, he replied that, despite their sins, God still used them to give us the forgiveness of sins and the body of Christ and therefore those hands were consecrated by God to be the means of divine grace.