

Borrowing the family car when I was a teenager was never easy. Everybody needed it. One winter I put my request in early, but the evening I wanted to drive we had an ice storm. My destination was north of the river, and as you know in Kansas City, going north of the river is like going north of Canada. You never consider it till you pack a lunch and send everyone to the bathroom. I had permission to use the car, but now I got advice. Dad said, "The roads will be slippery, you won't be able to see, other cars won't see you, and nobody expects anybody to go out on a night like this." However, being a teenager, I knew that one of my rights was to ignore good advice. So I did. Only by the grace of God did I get home safely. Dad's advice was logical, but sometimes people who get the advice are not logical. So, how do you give advice that gets results?

There's a remarkable example of giving advice in today's gospel. The scene is this: Jesus has reached a point in his career where he wants to turn over part of the job to younger talent. He calls the Twelve together and says, "Now I'm sending you out to carry on the work." You might say the company was diversifying. Now, put yourself in Jesus' shoes. Excuse me, Jesus' sandals. What advice do you give? Do you sharpen their sales pitch? Do you remind them of the value of the product? Here's what Jesus does: He talks about clothes, luggage, money, where to stay, and what to do when you fall on your face--All matters that are beside the point. What's surprising is that he does not tell them what to say or how to say it. What's the result of his advice? They are tremendously successful. They expel demons and cure the sick.

Now, why does this advice work? It seems like Jesus' speech deals with superficial matters--what to take, what to leave home. But the effect of this is that when the disciples take the road, they take only what they need. They remove all distractions. Then when they start preaching and praying, nothing hinders them. They are completely free to contemplate their work.

Sometimes our work doesn't get results. Our prayer seems empty, our advice goes unheeded, our sickness makes us depressed. Perhaps we've allowed too many distractions. Too much noise, too much TV, too many snacks, too many appointments. We live in a land of plenty and our plenty can be too much.

A woman I know suffers arthritis. There are days when the sickness overpowers her body, but she won't let it conquer her spirit. She disciplines her days in prayer and charity, and works with her hands as much as she can. Her life is spare, but her spirit is strong. When we remove our distractions we will be freer to do the work of God, and our work will bear fruit.

#### Anointing

Not just for dying, nor for just any sickness  
For those whose health is seriously impaired by sickness or old age.  
If your condition moves you to seek the sacrament today,  
Invite forward to receive with faith and devotion