

15th Sunday in Ordinary Time
July 12, 2009

Today's gospel passage from Mark is one of my favorites. Jesus sends out the twelve apostles to share in His ministry. I love that He sends them two by two. For the Jewish readers of Mark this makes great sense. The apostles were to give witness and testimony, and in Jewish law testimony had to be validated by two witnesses. The two apostles were to be the witnesses for the healing power of Jesus, expelling demons and curing the sick. But they also witnessed to the message of repentance, preaching it by pointing to its powerful effects in their own lives. Each was to be a witness to the validity of the power of Jesus in the lives of one another, as well as in each of their own lives. Living, working, and traveling together, they would know each other intimately enough to validate Jesus' influence in each other's lives. This brought credibility and strength to their preaching.

Jesus also warns that sometimes the apostles will be rejected. He tells them not to brood or take that rejection seriously, but to "shake the dust off their feet" (that is, do not be weighed down or slowed down, but move on to the next place) and keep preaching the message. Nothing helps more in facing rejection than having a missionary companion who can help one sort out if the rejection is a personal failure on the part of the messenger, or just a rejection of the message itself.

Jesus knows our insecurities. That is why He sent the apostles in pairs. It is always better to have a companion in prayer, ministry and discernment if you are going to carry out the mission of Jesus. It keeps you honest, grounded, challenged, and supported. It's a wonderful reminder that no one can do it alone (and if you think you can, you have already run contrary to the gospel and the Lord's expressed wishes).

So, in this rather self-indulgent "year of the priest" I give thanks and honor to the other apostle assigned to me in our witness to you of Christ's love, healing, and salvation for those who turn to the Lord in repentance. Father Ron Galt is a wonderful gift to me in the ministry to our parishes, and a gift to all of you as well. His presence has brought us closer to the Gospel ideal of going out "two-by-two" and I think morale on all fronts has never been better. I give God thanks that he is with us.

If only he had some semblance of a sense of humor...

God bless you.

Fr. Pat