

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (7/11-12/2009)

Amos 7/12-15, Psalm 85, Ephesians 1/3-14, Mark 6/7-13

Back about 20 years ago, I hiked up Long's Peak in Rocky Mt. National Park. The peak is a favorite place for hikers from all over the world; most of whom ascend in groups. I went up alone, traveling seven miles in distance and rising one mile over that seven miles. It took about four hours up and four hours down, a tiring but satisfying accomplishment. The one drawback was that I did it all alone, even though I met people along the way. Afterwards I wanted to talk about the day and the climb, but there was no one to talk to. I dropped in at a local restaurant for a burger and a beer; I was sitting on the patio, and, when the waitress came, I proudly told her that I had just done the summit of the peak. She nonchalantly looked up and said, "Oh, a lot of people do that." So much for my singular exploit!

I mention it because going it alone sometimes can be a very deflating and discouraging experience. In today's Gospel, Jesus sends his apostles out to do his work for the first time; they are to travel lightly, preach repentance, cast out demons, anoint the sick. *And they are to go two by two.* In this exciting moment, they are to support one another in the ministry.

A few weeks ago, we celebrated the Feast of the Holy Trinity; it is no accident and no mere human conclusion that there are three persons in one God. God has told us. Dare we say that God needs another to love as do we? Dare we go further and say that God needs us, made in His image and likeness, male and female?

More specifically, how much does our own faith and hope depend on others? Who of us believes alone? Who of us can possibly have hope without others? It has been truly said that you can only despair if you are alone.

We are made as interdependent creatures, needing one another, supporting one another, interacting with one another. That is how we image the Trinity and that is how God "images" us. That is why, when we are baptized, we are baptized into Christ's body, the church. Baptism is not just membership during which we get a card stating we belong; it's not a club membership or a library card or a pass to Sam's Club or Costco.

We become one with Jesus, sons and daughters of the Father, joined at the hips (metaphorically speaking) to each other. When we come to the Eucharist, we come to be with others before God in Jesus. Even if we are not totally comfortable in the crowd, that is where we belong, not mindlessly, or automatically, but thoughtfully and graciously and thankfully. So we too are sent out by Jesus to do his work in the world; we will not be alone; we will be with others; and Jesus himself will be with us all days until the end of the world.