

Commentary on the Gospel for Thu, Apr 30th 2015

“My brothers, if one of you has a word of exhortation for the people, please speak.”

Acts 13:15

Acts of the Apostles is arguably my favorite book of the Bible. Sure, it's great to learn alongside the Disciples throughout the Gospels, but it's only after Jesus' Ascension that their vocations fully take form. For many reasons, though partially because my last name is the French form of 'Peter', I have a fondness for relating to those special men chosen by Jesus. Acts tells us their tales and offers us a glimpse into the work of the greatest missionaries the Church has ever known.

Today's first reading shows Paul facing a similar situation to that which we face in our own faith lives. The leaders of the synagogue give Paul the chance to address the faithful gathered. It's not so much his specific words that strike me, but his willingness to take the stage and seize the opportunity offered him to serve the Lord.

We are offered these same opportunities on a daily basis. Although they are usually not quite as grandiose or blatant as the request Paul receives to address the synagogue, our invitations are equally important to heed. How often do we hear colleagues reference their work stressors, a challenging family life, fatigue, or anxiety? Still more, how embarrassingly common is it to be invited into a conversation of negative gossip about a friend, coworker, or family member? Each of these situations is an opening for us to share our Catholic faith through God's love and peace with those around us.

But what do I, a mere parishioner, have to offer my brothers and sisters when they give me those chances? Certainly, I don't have the experiences or expertise of Paul. I don't have the time to write nearly as many letters as he did! These are simple and lazy excuses. If only I had just recently completed a beautiful forty-day retreat focusing on dying to myself in order to increase my relationship with Jesus! I submit, in fact, that Lent has prepared us wonderfully for this mission.

Each of those situations is a prime opportunity to utilize the personal lessons the Holy Spirit laid on our hearts throughout our Lenten journey. What a beautiful chance to take what we've gathered in prayer, fasting, and almsgiving and transform it into service to others around us. The Lord spent a lot of time on the topic of mercy with me this Lent. Couldn't I offer the same consolation of mercy to those around me who are suffering from stress or fatigue? Instead of gossiping about someone's mistakes, wouldn't it be more appropriate of me to show them mercy, give them the benefit of the

doubt, or at least change the subject?

But Paul doesn't stop with simply accepting the challenge of speaking when offered, he invites others to know Jesus as he does. I witnessed first-hand the pure elation of a father embracing his son after the younger's Sacrament of Baptism at the Easter Vigil earlier this month. The joy in the faces of those celebrating their first full union with God in the Catholic Church is truly something to cherish and share with others who could experience the same peace in their lives.

Let's invite them into our faith. Let's accept their small invitations to share God's love with them. Let's offer to pray for them, invite them to Mass, and offer them the fruits of our Lenten journey. These simple, yet profound choices can make us prolific missionaries like Paul. Maybe even saints.

Sam Pierre - Alegent Creighton Hospital