

Kevin Nadolski, OSFS
January 27, 2008, *Third Sunday in Ordinary Time*
Our Lady Queen of Peace

This semester I am helping to teach a class at CUA for seminarians in the final stages of preparation for ordination to the priesthood. The class is called “The Art of Pastoral Leadership,” and this past week we discussed the things necessary to be a good leader in the parish today. You know, things like good preaching, a personal warmth, a quick mind, good people skills, and deep intuition. One student insisted that charisma was essential, another said charisma is unnecessary, a person just needs to be decisive. The debate went on. But the question did not end for me, especially in light of the gospel today.

Of all the people Jesus could have picked to help him with his Kingdom project, he chose four fishermen to get him started. This baffles me. Really! He had to know some smart people, who thought as he did, from the synagogue where he worshipped. There had to be a few people who were of his heart and mind, who knew at least a little bit about the formalities of prayer, Scripture, and ritual. Why didn’t he start there? Might I suggest two simple things that caught the eye and captured the heart of Jesus? It wasn’t that they were fishermen, per se. Rather, it was what they were doing when he saw them: Peter and Andrew were casting their nets, and James and John were mending their nets. Casting and mending, two necessary actions of a very needy God. Maybe Jesus saw a very simple skill set to be involved in his ministry: connecting with people and then helping to heal them.

I think we can all figure out the importance of the casting skill, the need for our discipleship to be attractive to others so that they might consider it for themselves. Or, look to us and feel pulled to go deeper in their relationship with Christ. This is the obvious call of the prominent image of be fishers. What I would like for us to consider today is the simple act of **mending** and how we are all called into this ministry of Kingdom-building.

Mending is the art of **repairing and healing**. Mending in the Kingdom is the delicate art of repairing and healing what is at the heart of the Kingdom: relationships. Yet, this is one of the most challenging tasks, I believe. It is hard to heal. Sometimes because people are so bruised and broken. Other times, it is hard to heal because *we* are so bruised and broken. Regardless, that does not excuse us from call to be menders.

While it is important that we grow in gentleness, forgiveness, and humility to help us with this task, I would like to turn back to James and John, Peter and Andrew to suggest one of the most important things for our mending ministry. They all left to follow Jesus rather quickly. Matthew says, they left “at once” and “immediately.” They were not attached to their jobs, their boats, not even the family business. Understanding our attachments and shedding them are necessary for us to be menders.

The Indian Jesuit Anthony DeMello says it well: *It is sad that love is blind. But is it? Actually nothing on earth is as clear-sighted as love. The thing that is blind is not love but attachment. An attachment is a state of clinging that comes from the false belief that something or someone is necessary for your happiness. Do you have any attachments—people or things that you falsely believe you could not be happy without? Make a list of them right now to study how exactly they blind you.* (p. 32)

We are attached to things, to people, or worse to our ideas and beliefs. I cannot help but think that we could end all wars if nations were attached only to one belief: That all human life is sacred, and it is the one human race that is our shared priority. Could conflicts in families end if we were attached only to the need for unity and peace and the health of our members? Could my own inner life be mended if I was attached only to source and force of all life that is the amazing grace of God, and not the need for success, approval, or wealth?

In just a few moments, we will baptize a new Christian. This Sacrament of God is the one central attachment of our lives. Aria will be permanently attached to Christ and his community of believers in a way that will change the course of her life, her eternal life, for she is placed on a trajectory that takes her all the way to heaven. So, are we. Let's continue to live as menders and casters, for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand!