



Archdiocese of San Antonio
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Knights and Ladies of the Holy Sepulchre October 18, 2014

Demas, Crescens, Titus, Luke, Mark, Timothy – companions of St. Paul who is in a Roman prison. The details in the first reading are intriguing, if difficult to understand fully. Apparently Demas has abandoned Paul to go to Thessalonika, but it does not say that he has given up the faith. He may be pursuing his missionary career elsewhere, somewhere safer than Rome. Crescens also left Rome to go to Galatia and Titus to Dalmatia. Only Luke is with Paul. As Paul's martyrdom approaches, he is eager for Timothy's companionship, adding that he should bring Mark with him. Earlier Paul and Barnabas – the disciple who originally vouched for Paul's conversion and was his missionary companion – had a falling out over Barnabas' cousin Mark whom Paul refused as a companion on one of his missionary journeys because Mark was unreliable. This prompted Paul and Barnabas to take different paths in their work of proclaiming the risen Lord Jesus and his gospel. Is this the same Mark in today's reading? Has there been reconciliation? We are getting only a glimpse of complex relationships and differences of opinion in the second third of the first century Church.

Paul is not depressed or worried: "The Lord stood by me and gave me strength, so that through me the proclamation might be completed and all the Gentiles might hear it." What is essential is the good news about the kingdom of heaven – proclaimed in an often unwelcoming and hostile world. It is the same in every generation including our own! And there are, at times, differences of opinion about where to concentrate our evangelization efforts and how to communicate effectively the compassionate, loving message of the gospel.

Today's gospel reading highlights the importance of being clearly focused on and committed to the mission of disciples – proclaiming that the Kingdom of God is at hand. Jesus sends the disciples two by two – offering support for their work in whatever environment they found themselves – admittedly sending them out like lambs among wolves!

We believe that the Kingdom of God is already here – ushered in by the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus – growing and empowered by the Holy Spirit! We also know very well that the Kingdom of God is not yet fully here. Every day's news makes this abundantly clear. While Jesus has been definitively victorious over the forces of evil, there are evil forces in the world seeking to sow chaos, death, and destruction. Jesus' disciples – we missionary disciples, you and I – are sent out into the world and both led and empowered by the Holy Spirit to make the Kingdom of God more of a reality in our time and place.

There are the obvious flash points – violence and corruption in Central America and Mexico, threats to peace in Eastern Europe, worries about a nuclear Iran and anxieties about North Korea's intentions. Especially in our purview as Knights and Ladies of the Holy Sepulcher of Jerusalem, there is the ongoing crisis in the Near East and North Africa with devastating impact on the Christian communities that have been there since the time of Paul, Timothy, Luke and Mark. Paul and Barnabas began their missionary work in Antioch in Syria where, according to tradition, Peter was the first bishop. While Christian communities in Syria and Iraq are undergoing horrendous persecution and violence, other Christian communities are suffering in Israel, the West Bank, Egypt, and other places in the region. As their sisters and brothers in the faith, we must stand in solidarity with them – not only with prayer and financial help but also in advocacy for justice (defending their basic human rights) and for peace in the region.

Meanwhile the Extraordinary Synod in Rome has ended the initial discussions about our pastoral response to challenges and crises facing married and family life around the world. While there has been unity of faith, adherence to Church doctrine, and authentic dialogue about complex issues, there have also been sharp differences of opinion. That should not surprise us. The next year will involve further discussion of

these issues in preparation for the Synod next October in Rome. Actually, the discussions and decision-making about the new evangelization in our place and time – in a rapidly changing, sometimes hostile world – will continue well into the future. We will all be called upon to engage in dialogue and reflection on fundamental issues of Church teaching based on the inspired Word of God, the Bible, and especially how these impact the reality of married and family life today.

May Our Lady of Guadalupe be ever with us and all disciples in following faithfully her beloved Son and proclaiming the Gospel of Life, the Joy of the Gospel, and the Good News of the Family.