

Reach Beyond Your Circle

1st Reading: Job 7:1-4, 6-7

| 2nd Reading: 1 Cor 9:16-19, 22-23

| Gospel: Mk 1:29-39

GROW: A parent took his oldest son on a tour of a technical theater program at a state university. The son had been considering an IT field – he is everyone’s go-to whenever a technical issue arises in the family. The theater professor said, “Enroll in our program only if you can’t do anything else.” The implication was clear: Choose this field if you love it so much you can’t imagine pursuing a different career. The son tried a more practical direction, but ultimately came back to theater, where he thrived! I thought of this story when listening to Paul’s Letter to the Corinthians: He preached the Gospel because he *had* to – excuse the double negative, but he could not “not” share the Good News with everyone he met! Once he encountered Jesus, he willingly devoted his life to sharing the story of love and salvation to all those whom he encountered – the weak and the powerful, rich and poor, saints and sinners. Let us pray that God helps us recapture the wonder the crowds must have felt in Jesus’ presence – wonder that compels us to share the Good News, too.

GO: Wherever you happen to live, imagine “the whole town gathered at the door.” Even in the smallest of villages, that would be a big deal! So it was with Jesus, where crowds seemed to follow him wherever he went, wanting to catch a glimpse of this carpenter’s son who cured the sick and drove out demons. When the disciples found him off by himself, praying, and told him “everyone is looking for you,” Jesus told them they needed to move on to nearby villages. I sense an urgency in Mark’s account of Jesus’ movements, showing Jesus as compelled to reach as many people as possible during his public ministry. As I hear this, I think of how easy it is for us Catholics to remain in our comfort zones – whether a favorite pew, the same core group of “parish friends,” or even sticking with one ministry or one Mass time. But, as Jesus shows us, preaching the Good News – witnessing to the power of God in our lives – means we cannot stand idly by. We must share this news.

WITNESS: What if we tried to emulate Jesus, albeit in a small way, by reaching beyond our “circles” to greet someone new at our parish, volunteer for the first time or in a different way, or – yes – sit in a different spot! In doing so, we can challenge ourselves to “stretch” a bit and welcome others into our world.

May the Lord guide and strengthen you.

--Fr. Anthony Ahamefule