

Reflection on Acts of the Apostles: 12:24- 13:4

Wednesday of the Fourth week of Easter

The opening day of the major league baseball season usually falls on a late March or early April day. Not this year. Due to the Corona virus baseball games have been postponed indefinitely. In order to prepare for the beginning of the season, players participate in spring training. It is imperative that athletes undergo rigorous training in preparation for meaningful games once the period of training is completed.

Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, Paul and Barnabas were prepared to take the gospel message out to the world. The author of Acts, St. Luke, underscores the divine character of the Apostle's commission. They each have been consecrated or set apart for their public ministry. And the best preparation for the spiritual mission in which the two missionaries are about to undertake are fasting and prayer. The combination of prayer and fasting is frequent in Jewish piety. St. Luke writes, "While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them'" (Acts 13:2)

Prior to my ordination to the Sacred Priesthood and diaconate I was obliged to go on a week-long retreat. Prayer was indispensable for one soon to be ordained. All my years of training in the seminary was a preparation for the laying on of hands by the then Bishop, Howard Hubbard. My public ministry as an ordained priest of the Church began with prayers in the days immediately preceding my ordination and afterwards.

How do we prepare for the most significant moments of life? Do we turn to God in prayer? Do we fast? Do we understand that, like Barnabas and Paul, we too, have been consecrated for a sacred task of witnessing to the faith? Are we bold and courageous in defending our Catholic faith?

Our training in Christianity demands the practice of prayer and fasting.