

FROM THE PASTOR

Dear Brothers and Sisters



I am writing this column a week early, because next week I will be out on a mission, and will not have access to a computer. I am departing today, July 13th, for the Catholic University of America in Washington D.C. to participate in three days of retreat as a preparation for a mission that will take place throughout the whole country.

On Sunday, July 16th, a Mass will be presided by the Papal Nuncio to the United States, Archbishop Christophe Pierre. The Mass will be celebrated in Trinity College, in the context of the retreat/ mission I am participating in together with several hundred priests, seminarians, married couples and single men and women.

The Papal Nuncio will give us his blessing and send us out 2x2 to announce the Gospel, we will be sent out in pairs, two men or two women, as Jesus sent his disciples to announce the Kingdom of Heaven. My companion will be chosen by lottery, as will the destination to which we are sent. So I do not know who I will be with, or where I will be going. We will go out for a week to ten days, taking nothing for the journey, no bag, no money, no phone, no hotel reservation; just a return bus, train, or plane ticket to the city of destination.

By the time you read this column I will already have been out on the 2x2 mission for one week. The pairs will have been sent out to towns and cities across the country, from Arkansas to Alaska, from Montana to Mississippi, from New Jersey to New Mexico, from Ohio to Oregon. We will go to visit priests, to give our experience of God's love, and to announce the love of God for them, to encourage them in their ministry.

This will be the third time I have done such a mission. From past experience, I am sure that many of us will have the doors slammed in our face - yes, even by priests - we will sleep outside at night, we will experience hunger and want. We will also experience the closeness of God, especially in suffering and hardships, we will no doubt experience the welcome of the poor, and we will certainly experience the joy that only comes from the Gospel.

Sounds crazy, right? This is the way Jesus chose to spread the announcement of Kingdom of Heaven with his disciples. "If they listen to you, they listen to me, if they welcome you, they welcome me...if anyone gives so much as a cup of cold water to one of these little ones, they will not go without their reward" Jesus says.

The many hundreds of us who are sent out across the country are not going to proselytize, or ask for anything. We will simply go convinced that Christ Jesus himself accompanies us, in his suffering, his hunger, his thirst, his nakedness. He became the poorest of all, out of love for humanity, demanding nothing from anyone, even accepting to be rejected, to be taken for a fool. I will pray for all of you each day. Please pray for me today.

I will be back in the parish on July 26th, and I look forward to seeing you all and sharing my experience.

On Saturday July 29th, I have a wedding at Villanova in Philadelphia for the daughter of one of our parishioners, but I will be here for the Masses on Sunday July 30th.