

Commentary on the Gospel for Tue, Sep 9th 2014

Memorial of Saint Peter Claver, Priest

In today's gospel Jesus "spends the night in communion with God" on the mountain and then descends to the people awaiting Him below (very similar to Moses on Sinai, who descends to the waiting Israelites: Exodus 19-20). Here, however, Jesus calls others up the mountain first (cf. Exodus 19:21-25) and names them His apostles; His descent with them invests them with some of His authority and power.

Why specifically these men? It is important to note that Jesus names them only after conferring with the Father and that He chooses them in the Spirit, not selecting them on merely human bases. I would suggest that these men were what a friend of mine calls the "gentle searchers," men who were looking for God and trying to attach themselves to Him and His service. They were seeking God beyond what observance of the Law provided.

Jack Kerouac (On The Road) asserts that "[...] the only people for me are the mad ones, the ones who are mad to live, mad to talk, mad to be saved, desirous of everything at the same time, the ones who never yawn or say a commonplace thing, but burn, burn, burn like fabulous yellow roman candles exploding like spiders across the stars." That would not describe these men, no more than the curse from the Book of Revelation (3:15-16), "Because you are lukewarm, neither hot nor cold, I shall vomit you out of my mouth."

These men looked hungrily to Jesus for life, and He chose them as His own in a special way. As part of their becoming His, He expected a certain service and a certain constant growth from them. These apostles were neither obsessive action junkies nor inert, they simply sought God --- even if it was sometimes not faithfully or not humbly, almost never really understanding what Jesus asked of them or was teaching them.

Doesn't this apply to us as well? Aren't we also called by name, missioned, and inept --- but deeply loved?

Chas Kestermeier, S.J.