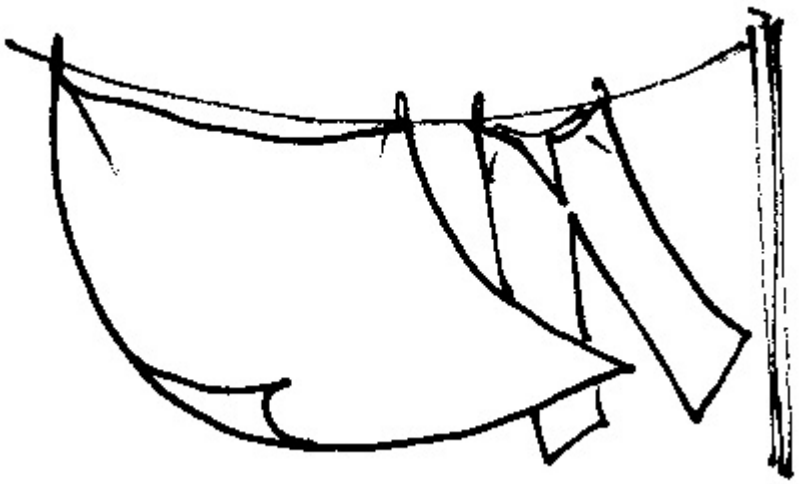
Spirituality
Pencil Preaching





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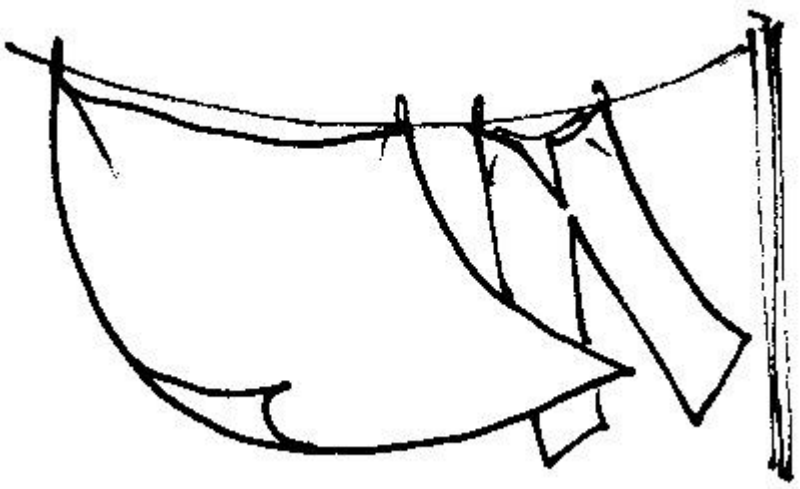

“He has given us new life to raise again the house of our God and restore its ruins” (Ezra 9:9).

Ezr 9:5-9; Luke 9:1-6

The Book of Ezra recounts the return of the Jews from the Babylonian exile under Cyrus the Persian with support to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple. The restoration of Israel under the Law was central to the renewal of the Covenant with God. Exile and Return became key motifs in the life of the nation, and this imagery also speaks to the church’s need for constant renewal. Pope Francis has dedicated himself to renewing the church as fulfillment of the command given to his namesake, St Francis of Assisi, when Jesus told him to “rebuild my church.”

Jesus sent the Twelve out to gather the dispersed people of Israel into the reign of God. He is the Good Shepherd sent to recover the lost sheep, and his Apostles extended his mission by preaching, healing and driving out evil spirits in his name. He sent them without resources or defenses; no walking stick, bag, money, food or change of clothes. Their vulnerability was itself an invitation to people to show them hospitality. Those who were open to receive them were blessed with miracles and peace. Those who shut the door on them missed out on the graces of the reign of God and saw only the dust of its departing messengers.

Every householder learns quickly that maintaining a dwelling requires constant rebuilding and renewal. Every church needs a community to care for it. Neglect or procrastination leads to slow deterioration, and the failure to prepare for the future by initiating changes to meet future needs creates crises. While some in the church

believe that not to change is the same as to preserve, needed change is the key to staying relevant.

Pope Francis seems intent on completing his papacy by promoting major structural changes in church governance with the upcoming synod designed to share authority with all the people of God at every level of its life and mission. Top-heavy, centralized control is endangering the future of the church by excluding the majority of its members. A revolution in how to be church is needed to rebuild the church.

Those who take up the pope’s invitation will step into the fray vulnerable and without resources except for their faith in the Holy Spirit. The winds of Pentecost are again rising within and around the church. We will either welcome the future being offered or be left in the dust of the past.

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