Spirituality
Pencil Preaching





by Pat Marrin

View Author Profile
patrickjmarrin@gmail.com.

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"The Father and I are one" (John 10:30).

Acts 11:19-26; Jn 10:22-30

I have been writing Pencil Preaching for 10 years, more than three trips around the three-year cycles of the Lectionary and long enough to know that very little of what I share is original. I offer what others said first and better, in the books I have read, the writers I have edited in *Celebration*, the worship resource of the *National Catholic Reporter*. Their perspectives have blessed me as they seeped into my life experience and understanding.

You benefit from some wonderful authors like Patricia Sanchez, who wrote commentaries for the Sunday readings for over 36 years, providing the basis for millions of homilies delivered to thousands of churches in the United States and other English-speaking countries. The truth is that most of us share what we hear. We form our opinions and structure our view of the world from our culture, education and even our biases.

When Jesus claims that everything he says is what the Father has told him, he is speaking of his essential identity. He is the Word of God, and his entire inner mind, heart and spirit flows from his intimate relationship with his Father. "Like Father, like Son" is who Jesus is.

A messenger in Jesus' time was an official representative of the one who sent him. Diplomats and emissaries spoke the mind and will of their sovereign. Jesus forms his disciples to be messengers in the same way that he is a messenger of the Father. He

is also the message itself. Jesus is the icon of God, the image and likeness of his Father, the firstborn of the New Creation and the model for our own transformation as God’s children.

The world will know us by our family resemblance to Jesus and to the Father. To convey this message faithfully is what evangelization is about. People meeting us should catch a glimpse of Jesus and be touched by the presence of God. If we allow this grace to pass through and from us to others, we may not be original, but we will reveal the most original truth of all, that God is the source and destination of all things.

The greatest saints, starting with Mary, did not project themselves or their personal holiness to others. They magnified the divine presence they had welcomed into their lives, the spirit that had formed them. Those who encountered them met God and came to know Jesus. In today’s reading from Acts, Barnabas goes to Tarsus to find Saul, who was transformed by his encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus and then withdrew to absorb this experience. Paul’s presence in the ministry of the church was a key factor in the spread of the Gospel, for he had put on the mind, heart and Spirit of Christ that he shared with the Gentile world.

To pray for this same grace is to follow Jesus, to imitate him, to listen to his voice before speaking, to act as we see him acting in every situation. This is the essence of Christian formation and the joy of the Gospel.

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