Spirituality
Pencil Preaching



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“Jesus went up the mountain and summoned those he wanted, and they came to him” (Mark 3:13).

Heb 8:6-13; *Mk 3:13-19*

While any comparison would be uneven, it may be easy for Americans to contrast the scene in Mark’s Gospel where Jesus goes up a mountain and picks his Apostles to the ceremony every four years on this date in Washington, D.C. The elected

president takes his place at the pinnacle of power, surrounded by those he has chosen for his cabinet. He delivers his “sermon on the mount,” an inaugural speech that lays out the goals of the next administration.

What any parallel does illustrate, however, is the fact that power flows according to the plan or mission of its leader. The Gospel emanated from Jesus. His central message of mercy reflected who he was and the vision of God he revealed at every step of the way during his public ministry, including his ultimate self-sacrifice on the cross.

The selection of the Twelve to represent the 12 tribes of Israel had symbolic importance for the church’s claim that Jesus was both the new Israel and the new Moses who received the Law on Mount Sinai. The men named also show that Jesus did not choose perfect people, but representatives of the whole range of human weakness. From this rough clay God would fashion the Beloved Community by mercy.

As individuals and as a nation, don't we always stand at the threshold of mercy? Without God's help we can never rise above our human shortcomings to achieve the ideal. There is a lesson and even some inspiration in realizing that despite our weakness, God is always with us on the journey toward justice and love.

Today’s commemoration of St. Fabian, one of our earliest popes (d. 207), offers us a possible glimpse into how mysterious God’s ways can be. As the story goes, Fabian was a layman and a stranger in Rome at the time of a papal election. When a dove landed on his head, it was seen as a heavenly sign, and he was chosen to be pope. He served for 14 years before he was martyred. Whatever our fears and expectations, history has never lacked surprises.

We pray today for our nation’s leaders in Congress, now in an ideological stand-off over raising the national debt limit. We are reminded that we are always hopelessly in debt before God, whose mercy makes up for our shortcomings and weaknesses. All we can do is imitate God’s limitless love by loving one another. We ask our Abba: “Forgive us our debts as we forgive those indebted to us.”