



After he performs his great miracle of feeding the five thousand near the Sea of Galilee, Jesus does something remarkable; as Mark's Gospel tells us, he takes his disciples away from the masses in order to pray. The import of this action should not be lost on a Dominican Volunteer.

Ministry and prayer, mission and contemplation do not conflict with one another. Rather, they belong together. It seems there is ever-present danger in active ministry: the danger of being *too* active; of letting our ministries consume us; of becoming nothing more than social workers; of neglecting that more profound element of our humanity, the spiritual life. Christianity is not, after all, a mere system of morality, nor is it a social order, and to reduce it to such is to trade the gold of the Gospel for a whetstone in the manner of poor Hans from the Brothers Grimm fairy tale *Hans in Luck*.

In the work of the apostle, prayer is the wellspring from which ministerial action must flow. My apostolate – and I believe any apostolate – must be rooted in and fueled by union with God in prayer, which we learn from no less than the Son of God himself in the Marcan text mentioned above. Contact with the glory and splendor of God through prayer – both corporate and private – impels the apostle to take the Gospel to the far reaches of the world, while strengthening him or her to weather the inevitable trials of this mission. I subscribe wholeheartedly to Jean Danielou's assertion that the contemplative who is

interiorly faithful in prayer is infinitely more efficacious for the liberation of souls than an apostle who is engaged in a lot of activity without inward fidelity.

As a Dominican Volunteer I must be both an apostle and a contemplative. Elijah served as my model in this; Elijah, that great prophet who stood in the presence of the living God on Horeb; Elijah who, out of jealousy for the Lord, fled into the bleak wastes of Sinai, and received an encounter with God that strengthened him to do what God required of him. He found life and refreshment on that holy mountain, just as he found refreshment at the waters of Carith when the land was parched by drought. Elijah certainly would have wavered and failed in the task entrusted to him by God without that theophany just as he surely would have died of thirst without the torrent of Carith.

This year I was blessed with a Horeb and a Carith in the form of the priory of St. Pius V. Joining the friars of the priory for Morning Prayer and Eucharist was my opportunity to stand in the presence of the living God daily. I met the risen Christ in Eucharist and entered into the prayer of the history of salvation through recitation of the Divine Office with the friars. It was the perfect way to begin the ordinary work of the day at Casa Juan Diego Youth Center. It carried me through the darkest days of a very cold Chicago winter, as the weight of being responsible for the souls and the faith of the little ones wore on me. It sustained me when I struggled to come up with an Elijah-like answer to God's piercing question "what are you doing here?" For that refreshment I am most grateful.

As I enter my second year as a Dominican Volunteer I brace to meet the challenges that will undoubtedly arise, but remain confident that God will strengthen me in my ministry if I continue to stand on my Horeb.