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"Come away by yourselves to a quiet place and rest awhile!..." Mark 6:31
Are you ready to accept the invitation?

Stones, Garlands – or What?

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Monday of the Fifth Week of Easter

Imagine the whiplash of feelings Paul and Barnabas might have felt: first, having to flee from Iconium, lest they be stoned to death; then seeing a lifelong cripple jump to his feet in response to their preaching in Lystra; followed by having to convince the crowds that, No, they were not Zeus and Hermes come to earth and, No, oxen must not be sacrificed to them! (*Acts 14:5-18*) I rather doubt that any of this was what they expected when they set out to spread the Good News of Jesus.

That was then; this is now. What do we expect, we who call ourselves followers of Jesus and strive to make his Way the standard for our daily life? We probably won't be stoned; but it is also not a good idea to expect garlands of flowers and sacrifices of oxen. Not even our best efforts may bring anyone – crippled or not – to their feet. It is more likely that we ourselves will be called upon to make sacrifices, of all types, for the sake of the Kingdom of God.

Such as: I may be called upon every day to sacrifice my convenience, my schedule, my plans. Others may not understand or appreciate the passion that drives me, and so may belittle, even oppose my efforts to make the Kingdom a bit more real. The Spirit Jesus promised us in today's Gospel passage (*Jn. 14:21-26*) will remind us of how often Jesus' best efforts were misunderstood, belittled, opposed.

And yet his faithfulness to his mission, and the gift of his Spirit, is why we are here today: still striving, in his name, to make the Kingdom a reality – first of all in our own lives, but then also in the lives of all those whom we are blessed to touch, in so many ways. We may see little, if any of the results – Jesus, in his thirty-plus years, didn't see many results either – but because he and the Father dwell with us, because the Spirit of Jesus acts in and through us, our presence, our efforts, our attempts to love will never go to waste. We have Jesus' word on that.

*"Anyone who loves me will be true to my word, and my Father will love [them];
we will come to [them], and make our dwelling place with [them]."*

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