

Rev. Paul A. Hottinger

Witness of Love under Persecution Fourteenth Week in Ordinary Time Friday, July
13, 2018 8:15 AM Hos 14:2-10; **Mt 10:16-23** (St. Henry) (God's mercy
includes the whole shebang.)

“Behold, I am sending you like sheep in the midst of wolves; so be shrewd as serpents and simple as doves.”

It is very hard to understand the workings of the human heart. **The whole gospel is basically a message of good news**, and yet the messenger was not well accepted. And here Jesus is sending out his disciples with the same message of the proximity of the kingdom, the availability in the present moment of the riches of God, God's basic providential plan for the human race, which is inclusion in divine transcendence and eternal life, and in the present moment even physical, mental, moral healing, **and yet Jesus knows very well it won't be well accepted.**

So he says, “I am sending you as sheep among wolves.” Sheep are defenseless animals. They are not predatory. In fact they are rather stupid. They have to be guided, guarded, directed, retrieved. Wolves are predatory; they really go after what they want. **Jesus knows the world is made up of people that are like wolves.** And yet the mercy of God is not limited to people who are like sheep. The mercy of God is not limited to the innocent, to the unassuming, to the gentle, to the morally upright. **God's mercy includes the whole shebang.** And **this is part of the good news** and it's a part that **even those who believe in it find hard to take or get or comprehend fully.**

And in some odd way the **witness of the martyrs**, of those who suffer, of the confessors, somehow their witness is **one of the strongest elements in the proclamation of the gospel itself.** The utter goodness of the message has never been enough for the weird people who live on this planet. What has moved them, what has moved whole nations, is the witness to the death of the martyrs, **starting with the twelve apostles themselves.**

So this is what Jesus is telling his apostles, exactly what's going to happen. You will be flogged. You will be pursued. You will be killed. And somehow this is really important that you endure this because **this is one way where the wolf can actually be converted by this witness of strength under pressure, of love under persecution.** This is much more powerful than the goodness itself of the message or even the beauty of a miraculous healing. It's this witness that has brought about the changes for the better that have existed so far in our world.