

Chosen for Each Other, continued

A book that has accompanied me during this past year poses this question: “Has it ever occurred to you that the people that surround you have, in some way, been sent to you by God?” It goes on to say, “They have been chosen, and you have been chosen to circle through one another’s lives as a welcoming presence, a constant blessing.”⁽¹⁾ I believe God chose Mike and Michelle to be in my life at this time, not simply because of my need for help, but for their witness of living and sharing the Gospel message. There is now a wonderful bridge of caring between their home and mine, a bridge built upon the words of Jesus.

Being *chosen for each other* has great significance for us as Franciscans, both in our fraternities and in our everyday lives. When we focus on others as “a gift of the Lord and an image of Christ” we will approach them with a certain reverence. Our encounters and interactions will be marked by holiness, conversion, and transformation. Without this perspective, we miss the blessing of others whom God has chosen to be part of our lives. We close ourselves off to grace-filled possibilities.

I found a good example of this in the film series *The Chosen*. ⁽²⁾ The early episodes unfold the call of the apostles, and we clearly see how these first followers of Jesus were real people, with distinct personalities and quite different backgrounds. We see how the apostles question why Jesus chose this person or that person. In particular, we see Simon struggling when Matthew, the tax collector, is invited to follow. While the apostles realize they have been chosen to follow Jesus, they do not yet see how they have also been chosen for each other. It would take Pentecost and the coming of the Holy Spirit to unite them.

We can experience a similar situation in fraternity life as we struggle with the faults and shortcomings we see the Father sees in every person the features of his Son, the firstborn of many brothers and sisters, so the Secular Franciscans with a gentle and courteous spirit accept all people as a gift of the Lord and an image of Christ. OFS Rule, Art. 13 in our sisters or brothers. The temptation is to shake our heads, look up to heaven and say, “Lord, you are certainly giving me many opportunities to practice patience!” But is this really what God desires, that we put up with each other?

If we genuinely believe that *we are chosen for each other*, we will look at our sisters and brothers much differently. We will no longer see their faults and shortcomings, but we will connect at a deeper level. Spiritual growth does not come from putting up with each other, but from our openness to the presence of the Spirit among us, conforming us to the way of love. It is for this we were chosen.

¹ Macrina Wiederkehr in *The Flowing Grace of Now*, p. 98

² *The Chosen* is a television drama based on the life of Jesus Christ, created, directed, and co-written by American filmmaker Dallas Jenkins. It is the first multi-season series about the life of Christ, and season one was the highest crowd-funded TV series or film project of all time. The series portrays Jesus through the eyes of those who met him. (Wikipedia)