

Reflection for the 24th Sunday of Ordinary Time

Recently I was thinking about Prior Konrad, who was a Professor of Sacred Scriptures when I attended Mount Angel Seminary. Of course, he was my professor before he and a number of other Monks from Mount Angel Abby, in Oregon, traveled to Mexico to found a Monastery. Fr. Konrad later became the Prior of Nuestra Senora de Los Angeles Monastery in Cuenavaca, Mexico. When I heard that Fr. Konrad was asked to go and help with the Monastery in Mexico, I was just amazed, he just seemed so at home teaching at the Seminary being a Monk at Mount Angel Abbey and living in the Northwest. I was just not able to picture him leaving a part of the country, and a community he was so very much at home in. Over the years I have been blessed to read letters, articles and newsletters about Nuestra Senora de Los Angeles Monastery in Cuenavaca. It was apparent to me that right from the start of Fr. Konrad's time in Cuenavaca he had found another community to call home.

One of the many things that I took away from my time in Fr. Konrad's classes on the Sacred Scriptures, was a great appreciation of the many Greek words that are part of our faith life as Catholics. One word above all the Greek words Fr. Konrad shared with his students stands out in my mind and that is the word "*koinonia*." From my memory of classes with Fr. Konrad it seems to me that he tended to focus more on the Greek word "*koinonia*" and its impact on the Church and the world, then other Greek words.

The Greek word "*koinonia*" is found 43 times in the New Testament and appears nowhere in the ancient Greek translation of the Old Testament known as the Septuagint. The essential meaning of the word "*koinonia*" can best be explained as meaning community, communion, joint participation, and group sharing. The word "*koinonia*" is not only used in the contexts of religion and faith it is also used in a secular way, such as in the case of a partnership between fishermen, or other groups of people in the same trade.

It is in the contexts of faith and religion that the word "*koinonia*" develops a great depth and richness. The words fellowship and community that are used as the translation of the word "*koinonia*" come up very short of the word they are being used to represent in English. It is amazing to realize that "*Holy Communion*" comes from the word "*koinonia*," this fact helps illustrate the depth of this word and its true meaning.

Today in our Gospel reading we have St. Peter approaching Jesus and asking Him, "*Lord if my brother sins against me, how often must I forgive him? As many as seven times?*" Jesus responds by saying "*I say to you, not seven times but seventy-seven times.*" Knowing that in the Jewish faith seven is the perfect number St. Peter is really asking Jesus if he just needs to forgive his brother to perfection, and Jesus responds with perfection and beyond. Jesus is not only inviting Peter to be as loving and forgiving as God is, but He is also encouraging Peter to maintain a relationship with his brother and therefore maintain the community the "*koinonia*." The parable that follows Jesus inviting Peter to forgive not seven times by seventy-seven times also has the same two-fold message, to be as forgiving as God is forgiving but to also preserve the community. In closing we as a people of faith are blessed to not only journey with a loving God, but we are blessed to also journey with a people of faith that are there to support and help us in our journey. May we be able to forgive and support those whom we journey with in this world looking forward to eternal salvation.