

So Rose is out again this weekend – because we have what? A story. Not a lengthy story, but rather two very short stories. Here's the first one:

Once there was a father who had five sons – who were constantly arguing!

One day, weary from their bickering, the father asked them to bring him a bundle of sticks. Handing the bundle to the oldest son, the father said:

“Break it.” His son attempted to break the sticks over his knee – but all he got was a sore knee – he could not break the bundle of sticks.

One by one, the father challenged each of his sons to break the bundle of sticks – and none of them were able to do it.

Finally, the father cut the string holding the bundle of sticks together and handed each of his sons a single stick. “Now, break it,” he said. And each of the sons was able to break their stick with little effort.

“My sons,” the father said, “if you remain together and assist one another – you will have the strength of the bundle. But if you are divided among yourselves, bickering and arguing all the time – watching out only for yourselves and not one another: you will be broken as easily as the single stick.”

We heard in the Acts of the Apostles – which we will be reading from throughout the Easter season – and which gives us the history of the earliest days of the Church:

“The community of believers was of one heart and mind – and they had everything in common.”

“There was no needy person among them, --- for they distributed the goods – each according to need.”

The early Church knew there was strength in numbers – they knew that individuals could easily be broken, weighed down with many burdens, easily lose their enthusiasm – without the support of others – they knew a bundle of sticks was stronger than an individual stick. . .

Now that our Lenten cleansing is over, God wants us to know the JOY of all the things he has in store for us. And one of those JOYS is the joy found in a community of like-minded individuals – such as we find in the Acts of the Apostles – such as we should be enjoying here at St. George/St. Jude.

The only problem is – some people still enjoy trying to do things their way, and will pick up and go home if they don't get their way: they will often times look out only for themselves instead of asking what is best for everyone. . .

With the grace of new life which is ours through the death and Resurrection of Jesus --- Let's do our best throughout this Easter season to recapture the wisdom of the early church: knowing that there is strength in numbers, knowing that individuals can easily be broken, weighed down with many burdens, easily lose their enthusiasm – without the support of others. Let's remember that a bundle of sticks is stronger than an individual stick.

And so another short story, possibly about some people we might know.

A pastor in a country parish heard that one of his parishioners was going about announcing that he would no longer attend church services. His rebellious parishioner was advancing the familiar argument that he could communicate just as easily with God out in the fields with the natural setting as his place of worship.

One winter evening, or perhaps it was in April – the pastor called on this reluctant member of his flock for a friendly visit. The two men sat before the fireplace making small talk, but studiously avoiding the issue of church attendance.

After some time, the pastor took the tongs from the rack near the fireplace and pulled a single coal from the fire. He placed the glowing ember on the hearth.

The two men watched as the coal quickly ceased burning and turned an ashen gray while the other coals in the fire continued to burn brightly.

The pastor simply remained silent. But the parishioner eventually said: “I think you will see me at Mass next Sunday!”

The community of believers were of one heart and mind. . .