

## *Ordinary Time 30A 2014*

### *A Model for Others*

How did you learn to follow Christ? How did you learn to practice your Catholic faith? I suspect there was someone who provided you with a *model* of what it means to believe in Christ, a *model* of what it means to be a Christian. For example, at a very early stage in your life, you probably imitated the devotion and piety of your parents. Or, perhaps there was a particular teacher or catechist who profoundly influenced you, and whom you imitated.

I have a vivid memory of certain people who provided me with a good model of what it means to be a Catholic. As a boy growing up in New Britain there were teachers and catechists who modeled the faith for me. Then, later in life, I was fortunate to know an older priest, who became my mentor, someone I imitated in order to grow into the faith.

The point I am trying to make is illustrated in today's second reading in which St. Paul reminds the Thessalonians how they grew in the Christian life by *imitating him* and then, how they became a model for others to imitate. The Thessalonians learned how to follow Christ by imitating the way in which St. Paul lived the Christian life. Then, after they had matured in the Christian life, they became a model for others to imitate. You see, growth in the Christian life is process of imitating others and then, once we grown into the Christian life, modeling our faith to others.

Those of you who are still very young need someone to imitate. You need good role models, people who can show you what it means to believe and live in Christ. Those of you are older need to be models of the Christian life for others so that they will know what it means to believe and live in Christ.

But we are also called to model our faith as a parish community. As a parish community we are called to be a model of what it means to live as a community of believers in and with Christ. We are called to be like the Thessalonians whom Paul commends in today's reading when he writes: "you became a model for all the believers... For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth." Each one of us should be able to say, "if you want to know what it means to be a Christian, imitate me." And the entire parish community of St. Mary's should be able to say, "if you want to see the new life that Christ has brought into the world, look at our community life."

We are now in the midst of welcoming back those who no longer practice their faith. This will not be an easy process, and it will not be completed by a single program. It is an-ongoing effort. But we can only welcome back those who have left if we are willing to model the faith we profess so that people will know the joy and hope of the Christian life. For only when they see joy and hope in us will they see a model to imitate and a reason to return to their faith.