

There is a great scene in the *Lord of the Rings* movies where two of the heroes, Samwise Gamgee and Frodo Baggins, are talking about whether they might become part of the stories told by future generations. Sam says, "I wonder if people will ever say, 'Let's hear about Frodo and the Ring.' And they'll say, 'Yes, that's one of my favorite stories. Frodo was really courageous, wasn't he, Dad?' 'Yes, m'boy, the most famousest of hobbits. And that's saying a lot."

Frodo replies, "You've left out one of the chief characters: Samwise the Brave, Frodo wouldn't have gotten far without him."

This short scene sums up so well the friendship between Sam and Frodo in the movie. Although Frodo is given the seemingly impossible task of bearing the ring, he is enabled to do it with the help and encouragement of his friend Sam, who accompanies him on his journey.

It is no accident that the writer of the Lord of the Rings chose to have its heroes paired with others. This is part of the Christian ethos that pervades the entire world of the Lord of the Rings. Although J.R.R. Tolkien didn't write the story in an allegorical way, he did base it on Christian principles like the importance of community and the power of humble people.

We see this principle of the importance of community at work in the readings this Sunday.

The first reading gives us insight into the work of God in Samuel's life. God has great things in store for Samuel, but there is a problem. Samuel isn't accustomed to hearing God's voice. When God calls out to him in the night, Samuel mistakenly thinks that it is Eli speaking. Eli is the one who finally helps him recognize that God is trying to talk to him. Only with Eli's help is Samuel able to say, "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening."

In the Gospel, we once again see God using the community of family to bring people to himself. When Jesus calls some of his first disciples, one of the first things that they do is go and share the news with those they know. Andrew, Simon's brother, was that chosen messenger who would bring the good news of the Messiah to Simon. Think about that! Jesus chose to reach out to the first Pope through his brother. Even though we know much more about the life of Simon Peter, we should never forget that the work of his lesser known brother, Andrew, was no less important.

God used Eli to help Samuel hear His voice. He used Andrew to introduce Simon to the Messiah. Who has He used in your life? Who is your Andrew? Maybe your parents, or a co-worker, or a good friend? All of us have people in our lives who help us on our journey with God. This is exactly the way God wants it. God came among us through a family; he called together twelve disciples; he sent people out two by two. Community is important to Him. He doesn't want us to go it alone.

As we think of the people who have been instruments of God's grace in our lives, let us thank God for them and also pray that they continue to let God work through them. Chances are, there are many 'Andrews' we can pinpoint in our journey. Those people who let God's grace work in them and through them are the future Saints of the Church. So let's help them with our prayers!

In truth, we are all called to be 'Andrew' for those 'Simons' in our lives. We may sometimes doubt that God could work through us like that, but let us remember that God does not call the equipped, but equips the called. Just like Sam was not the most talented hobbit, but he was just who Frodo needed to complete his mission. For all of us called Christians, we have the grace of God necessary to accomplish whatever He calls us to do, big or small. If God is calling us to be a witness to certain people in our lives, He will give us the words to say and the things to do.

Also, let us remember that we are meant to be *instruments* of God for others. We cannot control how they might receive our witness, but we can know that God will use our words and example in His own time. Most often, we are called to plant seeds which we may not see grow into full fruit this side of Heaven.

So let us all courageously ask God to show us those in our lives who need our witness, and pray for the confidence to follow God's leading as He uses us to draw more people into relationship with Him! I pray, *Come Holy Spirit, give us hearts of humility and obedience to seek out the Father's will for us. Prepare the hearts of those with whom we are called to share the Gospel, so that our witness might allow them to come to know you and follow you, Blessed Trinity. Amen.*