

# Companions IN PRAYER



Sisters of St. Clare  
Saginaw, MI

## *Listen with your Heart*

In this Gospel of Mark (MK 6:7-13) Jesus is sending the disciples out on a real life experience to practice and learn what being a disciple means. It is important that we look carefully at what Jesus is telling his disciples to do because as Jesus' disciples today these instructions are meant for us as well.

Jesus says to travel with only what is necessary. Do not bring supplies like money or food, but rely on the hospitality of the people. His disciples are told to heal the sick, and anoint them with oil. If we are not to take any extra baggage, than what is it that Jesus is asking of us?

One thing we notice when Jesus meets with people is that he is a very careful listener. Jesus listens for their deepest need and responds to that. Can we learn this level of listening so that we also can be disciples? I believe Jesus listens with his heart to those who come to him. They see his love and care and in these feelings a connection of faith is shared. Their faith in Jesus and his desire for their wholeness are the perfect ingredients for an encounter.



You may have a memory of someone coming to you with a serious concern. You wanted to say something to them. You wanted to solve their problem. However, the words you spoke to them seemed not to help.

I remember meeting with a young adult whose grandmother had just died. It was her first experience of death. She was so distressed. I remember searching for appropriate words to comfort her, but all I could do was listen. I also remember my first experience of death. It was when my grandfather died. I knew that somehow I had to absorb this hard reality. I knew that words could not help me. I needed someone to listen to me just as my young adult friend needed me to listen to her.

Listening to someone in need takes a special skill that is sometimes called attentive listening. When I try to

listen attentively to someone, I say a prayer inviting the Holy Spirit to be present with us. I intentionally listen without trying to provide a solution to their need. I focus on the other person's concerns. I allow pauses in our conversation. I create in myself a simple desire to be with the person at this moment. I believe this kind of attentive listening happens at the deepest level of listening and is indeed "listening with the heart."

Sometimes, I will see the person at a later time, and they will tell me how helpful I had been to them. As I recall our time together, I don't remember saying a word, however, they assure me that our time together was very helpful to them!

I believe that what actually happened in our time together is that they heard themselves speak their own words, their deepest concerns, which clarified things for them. In addition--and of the greatest importance--my prayer for the presence of the Holy Spirit in our midst made room for a mysterious sacred healing that we can never manage on our own.

When we gather in our Churches, we bring our desires to have Jesus hear our needs and our desires to be his disciples. We join together to be fed at Eucharist and to be encouraged by the strength and healing that Jesus gives. As we leave these places of nourishment and community, we ask the Spirit to remind us to listen carefully, lovingly, quietly, in the coming week, so that it may truly be the Spirit who provides comfort and peace to those who may confide their concerns to us as we go about our days.

(We are interested in your thoughts. Let us know at:  
<http://srsclare.com/about-us/companions-in-prayer-newsletter>)

*Sr. Laura and Sisters*

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