

B Proper 11  
19 July 2009  
RCL Mark 6.30-34, 53-56

### You Shall Know Them By Their Fruits

I'm in love. And the difficult thing is that I am in love with two women at once. It's a bit scandalous, isn't it? Are we heading toward another one of those headlines in the newspaper?

Actually, not. For I suspect that I am but one among many who have fallen in love with the same women. They are the leaders of our church, Katherine Jefferts Schori and Bonnie Anderson. Our Presiding Bishop and the President of General Convention's House of Deputies – each, I think, is a gift of the Holy Spirit to our Church in challenging times. Throughout the past two weeks of the General Convention governing our Church, I was more and more impressed with their wisdom, compassion, competence, and theological astuteness. These women rock! They guided both Houses of our governing body with assurance and openness, giving the lie to the slanders about them mooted about by so many unchristian dissidents in our Church. I am happy to follow them wherever they may lead in the coming years. (By the way, real news and summaries of events can be found at the national Church's website [www.dfms.org](http://www.dfms.org). There will also be an edition of the Episcopal News that will summarize Convention.)

Jesus said, "You will know them by their fruits." (Matthew 7.16) These women have led me to a greater love and appreciation for our Lord Jesus. Their words have pointed out His principles. Their actions have modeled His teachings. The fruit of these women is real Christian mission for those who will let them lead us. I hope you share my admiration for our Church leaders.

The past couple of weeks have put me in mind of today's gospel reading (Mark 6.30-34, 53-56). Jesus had sent the apostles (literally, the "sent" ones) out on mission to teach and comfort and heal. Now they have returned "and told him all that they had done and taught." They are amazed at the power working through them for the good of God's people. It seemed to me that General Convention was a bit like that. The Church, the Lord's disciples, had been out on mission, on the work of the Lord. We, His disciples, gathered together to report back to Him through His Spirit dwelling in us about the work He has given us to do. We are as amazed as those first ones at what God has been doing through us. We should not lose sight of the glory of the Church. It is not perfect, of course; it is speckled, spotted, weak in so many ways. Yet it is one of the few communities in our world devoted to mercy, compassion, beauty, creativity, freedom, holiness. It is the Body of Christ, Christ Himself, working in today's world. We should respect the goodness that our community does, as we remain humble about our own weakness, just as Saint Paul was: "...whenever I am weak then I am strong." (2 Corinthians 12.10)

I think our gospel reading today continues to instruct us for our own time. The Lord has recognized the labors of His followers and led them to a quiet place for their rest and refreshment. But the people, who are desperate for shepherding and care, intuit their destination

and go there ahead of them. When the apostolic band arrives, they find crowds every bit as needy as they ones they have left. Jesus must have been every bit as tired as His disciples, yet He “sucks it up”, to use one of today’s somewhat graceless expressions, and reaches out to the crowds. They need Him, it is God calling, and Jesus responds. Jesus’ work continues, because people’s need continues. I think that is where we are today. We have reported to our Lord Christ and, though we may be weary of the labor, there is still much to do. There are still outcasts to be included, sick to be healed, hungry to be fed, dying to be comforted, God to be worshiped, teaching to be done, disciples to be encouraged, children to be loved, holiness to be attained.

And if we fall in love with our leaders and if those leaders take us to new love for our Lord Christ, then so much the better. You shall know them by their fruits.