

Homily 2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time A Cycle Jan 18-19, 2014

♪ *In Christ there is no east or west, in him no south or north.
But one great family bound by love throughout the whole wide earth.* ♪

Monday, Jan. 20, is the day we remember the life and work of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. this year

The week of prayer for the unity of Christians begins on January 18
This is a week when we join Jesus in praying that all may be one, as he and the Father are one. The theme for this year is "Has Christ been divided?"

This theme fits well with the 2nd reading, where Paul writes, "We send greetings to you who have been made holy in Christ Jesus, and to **all those everywhere** who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

The song I just sang connects both events with all the readings for today:
In Christ there is no Black or White, no Muslim or Jew, no Hispanic or Anglo.
In Christ there is no Protestant or Catholic, no traditionalist or progressive.
In Christ there is no young or old, no rich or poor, Democrat or Republican.

In today's Gospel, John the Baptist is still center stage, as he was last Sunday, and he is clearly pointing to Jesus. John is a *prophet*, in the tradition of Micah and Isaiah.

John is the lamp, but Christ is the light shining from the lamp.
John is the voice, but Jesus is the Word, the living word of life and love and truth.

And what is a prophet? A prophet is someone like our friend Pat [the porcupine]. Pat protects and comforts his or her children [we are not sure whether Pat is a he or a she]. But Pat can be a problem to anyone who attacks.

A prophet is someone who comforts the afflicted and afflicts the comfortable, as both John and Jesus did.

John the Baptist tells the truth about Christ in the Gospel today. He shares the story that we so need to hear today, in a world still seething with racism and prejudice;
in a world still blind to the damage done by war and abortion;
in a world still so slow to respect all life, still resisting or ignoring the call to unity.

In the Scripture - and the Mass itself - we hear the story of the one who will die like a lamb, rise from the dead, and send the Holy Spirit to raise us, not only from the death of our bodies but from the death of our sins and even from being infected by a culture of death.

John says, "Behold the lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world."
Behold the one who accepted death like a lamb without responding with violence.
Behold the one who forgives. Behold the one who prayed that all may be one.

Jesus is the servant of God that Isaiah speaks about in the first reading. Jesus is the one who makes us holy by baptizing us in the Holy Spirit, as both Paul and John testify. Jesus is the one who calls and empowers us to hear the call of God and to follow it.

We are called, quite simply, to see Christ in others,
to be Christ for others and to let others be Christ for us.

The Scriptures for today and for last Sunday are about what it means to be a baptized follower of Christ today. We are called by our baptism to live the words St. Clare spoke - "Gaze upon the Lord, Gaze upon his face" and to see Christ as a mirror of what we can become.

We are called to live in imitation of St. Francis, who said, "Preach the Gospel at all times, if necessary use words." We are called to listen to the words of St. Augustine - which he said just before Communion at the Easter Vigil,
"Behold the Body of Christ. See who you are and be what you receive.

We are called to preach by the way we serve.

We are called to preach the good news by using the gifts we have been given for the good of others, for the good of our own families and community, for the good of the poor, the hungry and the victims of war, terror and oppression. We are called to preach by our lives - as Pope Francis does so eloquently.

We are called to speak the truth about Jesus as John the Baptist did:
that he came as Prince of Peace and saved us without killing his enemies;
that his face is black as well as white, Palestinian as well as Jewish;
that he is mirrored in the faces of those who are Asian, African, American and European;
that he teaches through his Spirit in the Church that all life is sacred, from before birth to the moment of death.

When we speak the truth about Jesus, by our lives and our words, we are empowered by our Baptism & Confirmation to be a light to the nations, like the servant in the first reading.

When we truly hear the truth about Jesus, we hear the truth about ourselves, as members of his body, baptized by his spirit. We are blessed with the grace and peace of God our Father, & we can see that we are called to be holy and are united with all who call upon the name of Christ.

This week is a chance to hear and reflect on the truth about Jesus and the call to be his followers. It is an opportunity to reflect on how God is calling me to follow his Spirit. It is a chance to sing with the Psalmist:

♪ Here am I, O God, I come to do your will, here I am, I come to do your will. ♪

Readings:

First Reading – Isaiah 49:3, 5-6 [I will make you a light to the nations]

Responsorial Psalm – Psalm 40 “Here am I, Lord, I come to do your will.”

Second Reading – 1 Corinthians 1:1-3 [Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the
Lord Jesus Christ]

Gospel – John 1:29-34 [Jesus is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit]