

2nd Sunday of Ordinary Time, C cycle, St. John the Baptist, Valatie, NY, Jan. 16 – 17, 2010

1st Reading: Isaiah 62:1-5 [The Lord delights in you]

Responsorial Psalm 96 [Sing to the Lord a new song]

2nd Reading 1 Corinthians 12:4-11 [The Spirit is given for the common good]

Gospel John 2:1-11 [Do whatever he tells you]

♪ Let There be Peace on Earth and let it begin with me.

Let there be peace on earth, the peace that was meant to be.

With God as our Father, we are family, let us walk with each other in perfect harmony. ♪

Peace on earth is a grand idea, but it begins with small choices. Jesus brought peace to a family in today's Gospel. When his mother says, "they have no wine," he, at first, says, "How does this concern of yours involve me?" They disagree about what to do about the situation, and Mary trusts her son to do what God calls him to do.

Then she says those wonderful words of faith to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." And what happens? He *does* get involved. And there is enough wine for the whole village, 150 gallons! His gift was both unexpected and excessive. It was more than they needed and beyond their power to make it appear.

It's a preview of the cross and resurrection, the "hour" that Jesus is talking about when he says, "My hour has not yet come." But it is also a sign of hope for all families - because it is a promise that Jesus chooses to be involved with our everyday life.

If we look at the story with the eyes of the Spirit, it gives us hope that peace is possible between married couples, in families and far beyond. He is there when we run out of wine, when we run out of energy, ideas or money, and he is present when we are celebrating our love and our relationships as brother and sister, husband and wife, parent and child.

The message of this story is that the Spirit of God is the ground your marriage grows in, the air our family relationships breathe, the water and wine they need to live and to celebrate. The story also shows us how to fight, how to disagree without hurting each other, as Jesus and his mother did: with respect, with honesty, with readiness to follow the guidance of a higher power and to change, if necessary, to do that.

But the peace that we long for and pray for goes far beyond one family or one village. The people of Haiti have been on the news almost constantly in the past few days. As I look at the scenes on CNN & MSNBC, I think of the words of the Gospel today: "they have no wine." For them it means, "They have no homes, no food, no water, no money, no power, no hospitals, no medicine." And people from all over the world are responding, each in their own way, to the spirit of the words Mary spoke, "Do whatever he tells you."

St. Paul reminds us in the second reading that God still gives gifts to us. And the gifts he gives are given not only to individuals, but to families and communities, to parishes and dioceses. But they are **not** given for the private good of any individual or group.

In today's 2nd reading, we hear the words: "the manifestation of the Spirit is given **for some benefit**" In the original Greek, the last few words could be better translated: "**for the common good.**" The sense of what Paul is saying, in the context of the whole letter to the Corinthians is clearly: "the gifts of the Spirit are given **for the common good.**"

Many people and groups all over the world are using their gifts for the good of the people of Haiti. The gifts we have received are still for the common good, especially the good of those most in need. As St. Basil once said, "the second coat in your closet belongs to the poor."

The response to the earthquake in Haiti can even contribute to peace among Christians and beyond. People of all religions are being saved, and gifts from Catholics are providing food and medicine to anyone who needs them. Tomorrow we begin the week of prayer for Christian unity, [January 18-25]. Working together to help the poor is one of the most powerful and practical answers to the prayer of Jesus that all may be one.

Two prophets of our own time have lived that prayer and applied the wisdom of Paul to the different forms of Christianity we see in the world.

Brother Roger of Taizé was a member of the reformed Church who lived as a monk with Catholics and other Christians in France until he died in 2005. He once wrote:

Reconciliation between Christians is not in order to be stronger against anyone, but to be a ferment of reconciliation and confidence for believers and non-believers [in Christ] too. Christians would withdraw into themselves if that passion of Christ, reconciliation, did not open out to a passion for peace and reconciliation in the entire human family.

He goes on to say that each of our religious traditions is a gift to the others, and that our differences can *enrich* us rather than divide us. He talks about how Catholics have been enriched by the Protestant reverence for the Scripture and Protestants have been enriched by the Catholic reverence for the Eucharist.

And Pope John Paul II, who also died in 2005, wrote in his book, Crossing the Threshold of Hope: "*Could it not be that these divisions [among Christians] have also been a path continually leading the Church to discover the untold wealth contained in Christ's Gospel and in the redemption accomplished by Christ? Perhaps all this wealth would not have come to light otherwise.*"

If we were to apply the truth of those reflections not only to other Christians but to Judaism and Islam and other world religions, we would think and act very differently from the ones who use religion as a justification for war and terror, or as a reason for condemning people because of their religious affiliation. And to the degree that we work together for the good of the world and its people, we are choosing to let peace and unity begin with us.

Tomorrow is the holiday honoring Martin Luther King Jr., another prophet of the 20th century. He was murdered in 1968 because he spoke God's prophetic truth. He gave his life for peace among different races and cultures. The prophet Isaiah says to Israel, "*The Lord delights in you and calls your land his spouse.*" Jesus extends this prophesy to all nations, races and cultures. Through his words and his life, He proclaims in no uncertain terms that we are all one race, the human race. We are all one family with God as our common Father.

When that truth sinks in, we will be more willing and able to respect life from the womb to the tomb, in the poor and the rich, in those who look like us and those who are different. We will be more willing to use our gifts for the common good, especially for those who are most in need.

The story of Cana is really about the formation of a new community, a beloved community, as new wine replaces the old ways of living represented by the water jars used in Jewish rites of purification. We will run out of wine again and again, and we will get tired of the journey. But a few of ML King's words express the challenge and the hope Jesus lived and preached, and challenge us to do whatever he tells us.

"Before it is too late, we must narrow the gaping chasm between our proclamations of peace and our lowly deeds which precipitate and perpetuate war. In a real sense, all life is interrelated. The agony of the poor impoverishes the rich; the betterment of the poor enriches the rich.

♪ Let peace begin with me, let this be the moment now...
With every step I take let this be my solemn vow,
To take each moment and live each moment in peace eternally.
Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me. ♪