

Church of the Good Shepherd
and
St. John the Evangelist

3 Epiphany
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Fr. Bill McGinty

“To Dream the Impossible Dream!”

Every now and then we read a story where the seemingly impossible happens against all the odds. Americans cannot, but help themselves; we are all suckers for an underdog story. We like to see someone come out of nowhere and win against overwhelming opposition. So when Vince Lombardi left the Giants as offensive coach in 1959 and went to Green Bay as Head Coach, most people had to get out a map of the U.S.A. just to find out exactly where Green Bay was.

“The Rocky Movies,” of the 1970’s had the same appeal, because they pitted an unknown against the heavy weight champion of the world. Perhaps even Forrest Gump told the same story that success can come from the most unexpected places. Today, a portion of the population will turn on their TV’s to see if two years after the disaster that was Katrina, New Orleans, can reach the 41st Superbowl.

Almost all of those achievements that I listed began with a dream. A dream to do what seemed impossible; a dream to achieve, when everyone said “No, it cannot be done.”

Today’s Gospel, has Jesus return to his home town of Nazareth. He has been away a long time. His fame has gone ahead of him. Already his teaching and healing have won him notice, praise and a reputation as a Prophet and holy man.

In the synagogue in Nazareth, he stands up to read. You can imagine that every eye was upon him. The elders of the town with their heads covered and the women watching from behind the dividing grill in the rear.

Jesus unrolls the scroll that was given to him and he reads. Bishop Paul says he reads “Salvation beyond the pale.” It is a great phrase. It means salvation for the poor, the captive, the blind, the oppressed and the marginalized. With one quote from Isaiah Jesus sums up the theme of his mission, his ministry. He has come for those outside the pale; for those who really have no chance.

So many of the “no chance” stories that come to our notice have to do with sport and that is a pity. It is a pity because there are millions of boys and girls out there who, despite their circumstances, have a dream and that dream usually has more to do with building a better life,

The Rev. William J. McGinty, Rector
110 West Catharine Street, Milford, Pennsylvania 18337
Phone: (570) 296-8123 ♦ Fax: (570) 296-4383

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getting an education, winning a scholarship, helping their family, finding a house and making a career. Jesus declares in his hometown that it is he who has been appointed to being “Good News to the no chance dreamers of this world,” and he does so because he himself has been touched by the Spirit of God.

St Paul in this famous passage from I Corinthians is similarly concerned about those people in the church who consider themselves as of little or no account. He wants to tell them that they too are the “Body of Christ” and are just as important as any who think that they should have the most prominent place. It might amuse us that the kind of problems we face at a Diocesan or parish level about whose job is really important were the exact same thing that concerned the Christians of Corinth two thousand years ago.

Those two thousand show us that Christ chose the most unlikely to make his dream of the Kingdom, become a reality. Whether it was Francis of Assisi or Mother Teresa of Calcutta, it seemed that God took delight in raising up the lowly to do the impossible.

All of this has me thinking about how we deal with the impossible in our lives. Perhaps, the impossible just never comes to the fore for us, because we no longer dream dreams. To reach for the impossible you have to create a dream, a vision, a goal that one day you can accomplish.

Matt Busby was a Scottish soldier who came out of the 2nd World War in 1946 and took over a rather depressed soccer club called *Manchester United*. They had little success and their stadium had been bombed in the war. In 10 years he coached them to three championships and a cup win. In 1958 he had the greatest team in Europe with an average age of 21. They were so young that the press nicknamed them “The Busby Babes.” Busby’s dream was for his team to win the European Cup. But on an icy runway in Munich on February 6th the team was all but wiped out in a horrendous plane crash. Busby himself survived after lingering close to death for 3 months. When he returned to work it was to rebuild his team and to set out after his dream. 10 years later in May 1968 his *Manchester United* won the European Cup at Wembley Stadium. Asked about his accomplishment many years later, Busby said: “You have to have a dream. It is what challenges you to be better than you ever think that you can be. It dares you to make the impossible, possible.”

In Luke’s Gospel Jesus is the one who comes into so many ordinary peoples lives and offers them a dream. I am not going to ask you this morning what dream God put before you 20, 30 or 40 years ago, but I am going to ask you what dream you gave to any of the young people in your life recently, because the Good News of Jesus, only comes to the young through you and

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me. Francis and Teresa did amazing things because someone gave them the Good News of Jesus.

We fall into a deep hole when we think that Evangelism is something that we do for people out there, in order to get them in here. Whatever happened to evangelizing each other, what ever happened to passing on Jesus' dream to our children?

Evangelism forces all of us to become teachers and as teachers our first job is to allow our young to dream and then encourage them to go after that dream. Is there anything more terrible than an adult who crushes a child's dream? Is there anything more wonderful than an adult who encourages a child to reach for their dream?

In a few months time the dream so many had in this church of a pipe organ, will be realized. I am sure that will be a proud and happy day, but it cannot be our only dream. For the Gospel calls us all to something more. It calls us to be that Oasis to the poor, the blind and the marginalized. It asks us as a church to be the Good News and like Christ himself to be filled with the power of the Spirit in our own home town. Because it is only when the blind see, the deaf hear and the sick are cared for that we will ever come close to fulfilling Christ dream of the Kingdom of God. That is why we are here. That is our mission. This is the scripture we need to fulfill. Music and song can celebrate that mission; they can never take its place. Let us pray today that the dream of passing on and living the Good News never fades from our hearts.

Amen+

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