

Church of the Good Shepherd
and
St. John the Evangelist

1st Sunday after Pentecost
June 11, 2006
Fr. Bill McGinty

“Oh My God!”

Today’s first reading should be familiar to all of us. It is the story of “Moses and the Burning Bush.” God tells Moses: “Come no closer! Remove your sandals from your feet for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.”

“What makes something holy ground?” Surely, it is that God himself has been present there. The story goes on to say that Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God.

We have lost that sense of reverence. Somewhere in the last forty years, people have lost the sense of awe, wonder, respect, and fear of God and his presence, nor too, do we have the same reverence for sacred places anymore. That is not to say that we shouldn’t have that reverence, it is merely to say that we don’t.

Even when we come to church the awe and idea of the holy, does not surround us, like it did our parents. I am here to day to tell you that it should. I am here today to tell you that it should because I do not believe in a little God. I do not believe in a stone God’ I do not believe in a dictator God, or a tyrant God. I believe in a God, who is the purest essence of Spirit love imaginable and to such a degree that galaxies and universes burst into life at the first instant of his thought. One mille second of his thought holds you and I in existence. For our God is so mighty, so awesome, that his existence and being is too great for us to comprehend.

Need we fear God? Yes, we need to fear God. I believe that to be a healthy fear that breeds respect and regard the same way we fear electricity or the power of nature.

Some fears are healthy, they keep us focused, sharp and attentive and they produce reverence. Reverence is our way of demonstrating our humility and our love. Reverence is tied up with mystery and that is a good thing. If you are a real man, you have a reverence for women, whether it is your mother or your wife. That reverence is bound up in mystery and respect not just for the feminine, but for the genesis and authorship of life that is a part of their nature and being.

How much more then should we have a reverence for God. Walk down any school hallway and count the times you hear the phrase: “Oh my God!” Our reverence has slipped and people have reduced God to manageable proportions.

It is not that God has gotten smaller; it is that we have reduced him in size to fit him into our lives, somewhere between the cell phone and our last visit to the doctor. As Brian Stein recently wrote: “We have excluded God from our schools, courts, city halls and government, and then we blame him when things go wrong. The truth is, “we asked him to leave,” and being a God of love and not tyranny he did.

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Now we are amazed that our children have little respect for life and shoot each other or resort to drugs and alcohol.” End of quote.

I have to tell you today, that not only are there places that are sacred, but there are people who are sacred and exude holiness also.

St Paul in the letter to the Romans in the 2nd reading refers to people who live in the Spirit. They are, he says truly “children of God.” Most of us would consider ourselves too sophisticated, too smart, too street-wise, to call ourselves “children.” But then we also tend to think we have all the answers when we do not.

In the Gospel, Nicodemus comes to see Jesus by night. Nicodemus is a good man. He is a Pharisee, a member of the Sanhedrin, and a scholar. Nicodemus seeks a simple truth. “What must a man do to be saved?” The conversation that ensues is difficult for Nicodemus to understand. Jesus tells him that there is a different kind of life to pursue. It is a life of the Spirit, because God is Spirit and is above all temporal, and material, things. We touch this life here on earth at times, we feel love, forgiveness, compassion, awe and wonder, but these feelings are fleeting. It is only when we are “born again.” It is only when we convert our thinking, and allow ourselves to think like God, that this transformation takes place in us.

Jesus does not suggest that it is easy. To be reborn, you have a reverence for every living thing, tough to do, especially if we don’t even have a reverence for our self.

The analogy of being born again is a good one to make as an illustration of Jesus’ teaching. Most people have a reverence for a new born baby. We identify with its innocence and potential. We wonder at the miracle of its existence and the awesome nature of new life. We envy its opportunity to live a life free from our mistakes and missed opportunities.

Jesus turns to Nicodemus and tells him, “You can begin again. You can be born again. All you need do is believe.” Believe in the love of the God, who makes galaxies a reality. Believe in the God who conceived you as an idea in his mind, the God who brought you into existence and longs for you to be set free.

It is not God who holds us back from fulfilling our potential. It is us. It is our inability to see the Spirit and beauty in each other. It is our inability to believe in ourselves and the gifts that God has given us.

In this church we have men, women and young people with the most incredible gifts, abilities and vision. It is only when we as individuals begin to believe in ourselves, that we will truly begin to believe in the God who created us. It is only when we reverence ourselves as sacred and Spirit filled, that we will begin to reverence our God as mighty, loving and wonderful. The day that happens, will be the day we really recognize the holiness of this place, that this is a sacred place, in which our God makes himself present.

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Can you hear him? Can you hear God speak to us? You have to be real quiet and real still to hear God. Ezekiel says he cannot be heard in the hurricane or the strong wind, the volcano or the cyclone. God is heard in the gentlest of breezes. God is in the quiet still, whisper of your innermost thought.

That is why, when that 10:00 church bell tolls, it tolls to remind us to be still for our God is making his way into our hearts.

This morning God is here and he is very, very quiet. Can you hear him? He is here in the soft stillness of Mason's breathe. For it is that breathe of life and soul that God gave to this child as gift. All the galaxies, all the universes do not add up to the awesome beauty of one breathe from this child's lips. God loves him. He is God's gift. Today we welcome him in the sure knowledge that the God of love once thought the same about you and me. We were gift too and he loved us. It is time to be reborn. It is time for us to put the word "reverence" and "respect" back into the word "God." It is time, to reverence this holy place as God's house. Repeat Mason's Baptismal promises with him today and believe.

Believe that God, who can make a universe in the blink of an eye, and make you reborn just as fast, to love and reverence him and yourself and for the rest of your life. If Mason today is a miracle as he approaches Baptism this morning, then let us through this sacrament of water and the Spirit, multiply that miracle for each of us.

Reach out. Reach out and touch the transforming love of your God this Sunday morning and take that God you meet out into your life this week, to share with others. Do that and you are Reborn, and you will have been gifted the power of love.

Amen+

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