

Epiphany Sunday

January 3, 2010

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### “Faith, Hope and Love-/Gifts for a King”

We only have to watch the TV news any night of the week to know that life can change for many people in the blink of an eye. A teenage girl text her friend, while driving, and drifts into the oncoming lane’ a mother is visited by an army officer and the chaplain dressed in dress uniform; a child disappears on her way home from school. In the blink of an eye, many people’s world changes and they know that nothing can ever b the same again.

Chapter 31 of the Book of Jeremiah, our first reading, seems to know this. In one of the most beautiful passages I the Old Testament, Jeremiah prophecies that one day God, the God of love and compassion, will make things right again. Even though, we know that the prophecy is about the return of Israel from exile, the re-uniting of the Kingdom of David, the restoration of Israel as a nation, and the coming of God’s Kingdom and his promised messiah, we cannot help but reflect, that this passage also talks of our lives and how the trickling grace of God’s love heals, restores and makes things new for each one of us, and more so for those who suffer pain and loss.

This passage reminds me of that great old Christian hymn that begins:

“All ye who seek a comfort scene in trouble and distress, whatever sorrow vex the mind, or ill the soul oppress.” Jesus who gave himself for you upon the cross to die; opens to you his sacred heart, oh to that heart draw nigh.”

The turn of the year and indeed, the turn of the decade, has many of us thinking back on lost years, lost friends, lost loved ones, knowing that aside from prayer, there was little we could do, but journey on in life alone. Yet this passage tells a different story. It tells us that God's grace is enough to overcome the darkness and bring light and love to all who are touched by his word.

"I am going to bring them, gather them, the blind, the lame, with weeping they come and with consolation, I will lead them back."

Jeremiah's words are fulfilled in the coming of God's son as a child in a stable in Bethlehem. They are fulfilled in the ministry that Jesus dictated in the Gospel, they are brought to fulfillment today by all who part take in his shared ministry and work as the body of Christ to reach out to the poor, the lost, the grieving and those who suffer. In celebrating the Feast of the Epiphany, we are acknowledging, that it is God's plan and his salvation that will ultimately win through, and put things right.

"For I will turn their mourning into joy, I will comfort them and give them gladness for sorrow."

Please, ignore the line that says: "I will give the priests their fill of fatness." This is a mis-translation from the Hebrew, and should read, "Among the ft, the priests find rest."

In the letter to the Ephesians, God's plan of salvation through Jesus Christ includes you. The author tells us: "Before the foundation of the world God destined you."

All of us who are now entering a new decade know that we can look back over the years and see that there were no coincidences, but there was the hand and word of God in our lives. Perhaps, those Wiseman had the same thought as they traveled back to their country of origin. They had set out with hope and

found something precious, that God cared about man, and he had given them a role to play.

The Wisemen remind us, that what began in a stable in Bethlehem continues today, and that we have a role to play in Messiahship. Christ's name cannot be taken out of our world any more than it can be taken out of Christmas.

Epiphany invites us to carry the torch of our beliefs as witness to Jesus and his plan in man's salvation.

"God has given you a spirit of wisdom and revelation." In saying that, Paul is telling us that we are the riches for God's Kingdom. We are the fruits of Christ's messiah ship. We are the light that dispels the darkness in our world. Because we have heard the Gospel, we have soaked in its message. We have proclaimed it day by day for 2014 years. We are Christ's power in the world and God's grace is freely available to us. We need that grace, because we live in a world, where good and bad dwell side by side. We need God's help to overcome the pain and suffering that comes to all of us.

The gospel today shatters the peace of that Bethlehem scene of Mary, Joseph and the baby visited by Wisemen. Into the picture ride the black shadows of evil and death commanded by King Herod. Like Israel in the 1<sup>st</sup> reading the family is thrown into exile and flight. They go down into Egypt in a scene reminiscent of Joseph and his brothers.

In the course of any one year you and I come across many people in flight and exile. They have all lost something, homes, family, parents, child, jobs, dignity. They have been driven to flight by death, hunger, recession, violence, sickness and poverty.

Like the Wisemen, we are invited to open our chests and give them gifts of what we have. And what have we to offer them, but the gifts of hope, charity and the gift of our time. It always comes down to that for us Christians doesn't it? "Faith, hope and charity." They keep popping up in our lives. They are the

only gifts we have to give, because they were gifted to us through every sacrament and every important moment in our lives.

Faith, hope and charity the fundamentals of our faith. Like you they were passed on to me by parents. Now it would seem important that our children and grandchildren inherit the too. Maybe that is the real importance of this year's parish pageant that the children see and witness the importance we give to the coming of Jesus. Even Wisemen full grown adults, dress up and come to bring their gifts as Kings.

Let us take our gifts of faith, hope and love into this New Year with us and remember that we too work for king. Let us share those gifts with others so that:

“Where there is no faith. Faith may be sown. Where there is no hope. Hope may be born. And where there is no love, Christ's love may fill hearts.

Amen+

