

Cycle C 21st Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reading I, Is 66:18-21

Thus says the LORD: I know their works and their thoughts, and I come to gather nations of every language; they shall come and see my glory. I will set a sign among them; from them I will send fugitives to the nations: to Tarshish, Put and Lud, Mosoch, Tubal and Javan, to the distant coastlands that have never heard of my fame, or seen my glory; and they shall proclaim my glory among the nations. They shall bring all your brothers and sisters from all the nations as an offering to the LORD, on horses and in chariots, in carts, upon mules and dromedaries, to Jerusalem, my holy mountain, says the LORD, just as the Israelites bring their offering to the house of the LORD in clean vessels. Some of these I will take as priests and Levites, says the LORD.

Responsorial Psalm, Ps 117:1, 2

R. (Mk 16:15) Go out to all the world and tell the Good News.

Praise the LORD, all you nations; glorify him, all you peoples!

R. Go out to all the world and tell the Good News.

For steadfast is his kindness toward us, and the fidelity of the LORD endures forever.

R. Go out to all the world and tell the Good News.

Reading II, Heb 12:5-7, 11-13

Brothers and sisters, You have forgotten the exhortation addressed to you as children: "My son, do not disdain the discipline of the Lord or lose heart when reproved by him; for whom the Lord loves, he disciplines; he scourges every son he acknowledges." Endure your trials as "discipline"; God treats you as sons. For what "son" is there whom his father does not discipline? At the time, all discipline seems a cause not for joy but for pain, yet later it brings the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who are trained by it.

So strengthen your drooping hands and your weak knees. Make straight paths for your feet, that what is lame may not be disjointed but healed.

Gospel, Lk 13:22-30

Jesus passed through towns and villages, teaching as he went and making his way to Jerusalem. Someone asked him, "Lord, will only a few people be saved?" He answered them, "Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I tell you, will attempt to enter but will not be strong enough. After the master of the house has arisen and locked the door, then will you stand outside knocking and saying, 'Lord, open the door for us.' He will say to you in reply, 'I do not know where you are from.' And you will say, 'We ate and drank in your company and you taught in our streets.' Then he will say to you, 'I do not know where you are from. Depart from me, all you evildoers!'"

And there will be wailing and grinding of teeth when you see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God and you yourselves cast out. And people will come from the east and the west and from the north and the south and will recline at table in the kingdom of God. For behold, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last."

About 12 years ago I was flying to Salt Lake City and had a stop over in Las Vegas. A gentleman got on and sat next to me dressed very well in a nice sport coat. He took out a book and a deck of cards. I couldn't tell exactly if he was playing cards or practicing card tricks so I returned to reading my book. Into the flight he asked me, "Have you been to Haiti?" He saw the Haiti wrist band I was wearing. "Yes", I said, "I am a Deacon in the Catholic Church and was just there in May. "Me too," he replied, "I was there last month for two weeks on a medical mission, I am a doctor. And, I am planning to go back this fall." We immediately connected and proceeded to discuss our life changing experiences in Haiti. I was surprised when he told me he lived in Montana on an Indian reservation. They had paid for his medical education so he would be working there for 5 years to pay back his debt. I asked him to compare Haiti to the Indian reservation. He said, "In Haiti there is devastation, but there is also hope. On the Indian reservation it is hopeless. The situation is just awful." It struck me that here was a man who went to Haiti to be rejuvenated. It must really be bad on that reservation.

The Scriptures this week tell us that God loves us so much that he sent His son Jesus to save mankind. And we Christians are meant to continue the legacy of the Apostles spreading the Good News of God's love and salvation to everyone we meet. We are gathered here today as Christians to hear His Word and share His Holy Body because someone influenced us...someone came and got us, so to speak, at some time in our lives, and brought us into this Christian community of believers. Like the 1st reading describes God sending fugitives back home to get their relatives. People came from all over because someone was sent to get them. For most of us it was our parents who brought us to church even at a young age. One time I overheard a 4-year-old at Mass with his mother. A baby nearby starting started crying so his father took him out the door. The 4-year-old turned to his mom and said, "that kid's not going to Bruster's today." I recall more than once years ago sitting in the parking lot with one of my young sons while my wife Pat was still in Mass. They may not be going to Bruster's

every Sunday, but we never stop bringing our children to church because we love them and want them to know God loves them too.

The psalm refrain today is the command to “go out to all the world and tell the Good News.” And the Gospel reminds us that while all of mankind are invited, we Christians choose to enter the narrow gate and serve God. This is not an option; it is a responsibility, and it is also a privilege. Today the command is directed to us. We are the ones being sent to invite and bring others to God.

As the 1st reading said, others may hear of His fame or see the glory of God ONLY through us. We are sent to be the light shining for all to see. We proclaim the God in our lives who we worship and serve by the very way that we conduct ourselves at work, in the car, in the classroom, in our neighborhood, with our friends, on the sports team, with our families, and even with people we don’t trust or may even despise. The way we live proclaims to the world around us that the love of God and salvation of Christ is real, and it is there for everyone. Jesus doesn’t ask what religion you are....He just loves. They will know we are Christians by our love. It’s trite but true.

Yet, we know we are not perfect. We sin. And we constantly judge the moral failings of others. Do we think salvation is only offered to the faithful? The Gospel warned that even some who know the Lord may be cast out. Or, do we really believe that we can effectively proclaim the message of God in everything we do and in the way we do it? We may be sinners, but believe me we are all Apostles nonetheless. God’s salvation is for everyone, and as Christians we are all called to serve, not to withhold or judge. We need to believe that He gives us everything we need to be good Apostles.

After Communion at the end of our liturgy today we will be commissioned to “go in peace glorifying the Lord with your life.” And probably without so much as a second thought we will respond, “Thanks be to God.” Hopefully the readings this week will shake us awake to our responsibility. You see, we are being sent to meet people in

every circumstance of our lives so that we can be ambassadors of the saving grace of God. This is not an option; it is a responsibility, and it is also a privilege.

In closing I would like to tell you what I wish I had told that doctor on the airplane that day...I pray he knew it during his time on that reservation. I wish I had said, "Haiti has hope because doctor you and I went there to do some good, and we are going back again. And believe me there is hope on the reservation because you are there. We can make a difference. God will make sure of it."