

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Ordinary Time

Something's missing. I'm sure there was something in this space for the past 6 weeks. I'm trying to remember. Something green, surrounded by 4 candles, a well in the center with stones and prayers for peace and then figures. Go figure. Oh Well, maybe it was just a mirage. Maybe it was something I just imagined. After all it takes a great deal of imagination to imagine peace these days. No, I wasn't just "seeing" things. There was something here. A peace garden. But where has it gone? I miss it. I miss the symbol of peace, hope and light from Advent and Christmas time.

Yes, Here we have returned to "Ordinary Time" although this is no "ordinary" time in which we live. Ordinary time after Christmas gives us a "breather" before we enter into the great liturgical seasons of Lent and Easter. This year we get to take a deep breath since Ash Wednesday doesn't come until March. Given the "extraordinary" events of the transfer of political power with all its Tweets and Twitters, Politics and protests, we are going to need to take a very Deep Breath if we don't want to lose the promise of peace, hope, joy and light from the Advent/ Christmas season.

But Thanks be to God, this Second Sunday in Ordinary Time always serves as a "bridge" between the Christmas season and Ordinary Time. This past Monday we celebrated the feast of the Baptism of Jesus which always ends the season but today we just heard another version of the Baptism. It's from John's gospel. What is so interesting about this version and what marks the difference between the way John's gospel tells it and the other gospels is that it is John the Baptizer who "witnesses", "testifies" to what he saw. And what did he see? Like the other gospels he sees "the spirit descending on him like a dove". But the difference is that there is no voice from the outside saying "You are my beloved son". No it is the voice of John the Baptizer that speaks, that testifies. "this is the Son of God". And what's the big deal? Why the difference? Could it be that belief in Jesus as the "Son of God" does not need a voice from the heavens but comes from within?

This passage from John's gospel can serve as a bridge for us as we move from Christmas to Ordinary Time. Bridges make connections. Unlike walls which dis-connect/ separate/keep people out.

Before I built a wall I'd ask to know  
What I was walling in or walling out  
And to whom I was like to give offense

Something there is that doesn't love a wall.  
That wants it down.

But bridges? Bridges, well bridge. You can get from this place to that and back again. Last week I preached about the Epiphany experience I had at the Holiday Train show at the Bronx Botanical Gardens. (read about it on the website) I won't repeat but I was amazed at how many bridges there are connecting this city. You see them all, except they are made of branches and other natural materials.

All the stories of Christmas,, culminating in the story of Jesus' baptism are testifying to the belief that Jesus is the bridge between the human and divine. Jesus in the fullness of his humanity, symbolized by the baptism by John in the Jordan is the one who is completely "of God". In Jesus we have the coming and going, the movement of love between God and us.

I would imagine that many of you know the work of Richard Rohr. The Franciscan Spiritual writer. His latest work is "The Divine Dance: The Trinity and your Transformation". In it he reimagines the way we think about God's inner life. The idea of a dance (perichoresis) is quite ancient but unfortunately this dynamic and interactive way of thinking about God's inner life lost out to the Atonement theory which is all about "payback". God good. We bad. Jesus makes up for all the bad in us. But Rohr tries to recapture this image of God's inner life that is not about walls between the human and divine but rather bridges, connections, like love itself.

Quoting Rohr:

If my instincts are right, this unearthing of Trinity can't come a moment too soon. Because I'm convinced that beneath the ugly manifestations of our present evils- political corruption, ecological devastation, warring against one another, hating each other based on race, gender religion, or sexual orientation—the greatest disease facing humanity right now is our profound and painful sense of dis-connection.

I'm discovering that the gift of the Trinity—and our practical, felt experience of receiving this gift—offers a grounded reconnection with God, self, others and world that all religion and spirituality, and arguably, even politics is aiming for—but which conventional religion, spirituality and politics fall short of.

If our God is a God who is the master of bridge building, will we follow the lead and go with God's flow? Or will we erect walls that keep others out? In these challenging times it's a real question. Bridges or walls? Will we find the peace garden "within", here in our hearts? Will we know Jesus as the bridge between God and us, not because of a "voice from the heavens" but because we know it for ourselves. And might we see Jesus in this turbulent time as the "Bridge over troubled waters? Laying down his life for us so that the bridge between God and us will always be there and of course the bridge to each other.