

### 3rd Sunday of Ordinary Time

Does anyone remember my homily from last week? Not that you should. So much has been happening between today and last Sunday. The Inauguration, Marches, so much claiming our attention. But let me jog your memory. Last Sunday, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Ordinary time acts as a bridge between the Christmas Season and this time before Lent begins. We heard John's version of the Baptism of Jesus, which acts as a bridge between the feast of the Baptism and the beginning of Ordinary time. I spoke a great deal about bridges. Jesus as the bridge between God and us. Jesus as the bridge over troubled waters. We are called to build bridges and not walls.

And here we are one Sunday later and there is another bridge to the Christmas Season. This time it's the reading from Isaiah which we heard as the first reading and then again quoted in Matthew's gospel "the people who walked in darkness have seen a great light". If you were here for Christmas Eve Mass, do you remember sitting here in the darkness, hearing this reading with its promise of the coming of the light while we were waiting to remember Christ's birth into this world? Do you remember Dee's singing, the Roman Martyrology?

(Sings) The forty–second year of the reign of Octavian Augustus; the whole world being at peace, Jesus Christ, eternal God and Son of the eternal Father, desiring to sanctify the world by his most merciful coming, being conceived by the Holy Spirit, and nine months having passed since his conception, was born in Bethlehem of Judea of the Virgin Mary.

Jesus, born in Bethlehem and raised in Nazareth. Do you remember Nathaniel's snide comment? "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" It is good to remember that Jesus grew up in a backwater, a small town in the north of Judea. He could have been born and raised as a member of the priestly caste. He could have been a power broker. He could have been one of the wealthy elite of Jerusalem. But God's imagination always trumps our human imagination. God in Jesus Christ enters the world of **insignificance**. Can anything good come out of Nazareth?

And when he begins his mission, whom does he call? Not people of power but ordinary folk, fisherfolk mostly. Throw in a tax-collector for good measure.

What we hear today in the scriptures is the inauguration of Jesus' ministry. This "nobody from Nazareth" has it in his mind that it's time for the world to be aligned with God's vision for the world. This is the inauguration that really matters!

If you were at Mass yesterday, you would have heard how Jesus' family thought he was "out of his mind". (As it turns out, my brother and his wife from Atlanta are here and he can tell you that most of my family thought I was "out of my mind", especially because of my imaginary friends. But I did have few real ones!) This Jesus was crazy enough to believe that God's vision of justice and compassion and welcome to all could capture the human imagination. And he inaugurates his ministry with ordinary men and women who are also crazy enough to follow him, who believe that God's kingdom is here. Jesus' inauguration speech in Matthew is very short. "Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand". In the coming weeks we will hear Jesus' platform, or strategic plan for the world. It's called the Sermon on the Mount and it will challenge the tribalism that creates hatred and division among peoples who prefer walls to bridges.

I suppose the question for each of us this morning as followers of Jesus, is "are we crazy enough to believe in Jesus' vision for the world"? No matter what party is in power, do we believe that ultimately God's promise and God's imagination for the world will take hold of every heart? The Eucharistic Prayer that we will pray today is "The Church on the path to unity". It's appropriate since we are still in the Octave of prayer for Christian Unity but also because there is so much division in our country and in our world. In this prayer we pray that "in a world torn by strife your people may shine forth as a prophetic sign of unity and concord. That's quite a challenge, even for God these days. But thanks be to God we have Jesus, the bridge over troubled waters.