

LENT SUNDAY V "B"  
MARCH 17/18, 2018

In today's Gospel we hear Jesus speak about his approaching death and glorification, and that his life and mission is like that of a seed that falls to the ground and dies to bear much fruit. Jesus' mission is a mission of love. The Greeks in the Gospel passage are on a mission to "see" Jesus. They wanted to see this man whose fame had spread. Next Sunday is Palm Sunday when we read the Passion narrative and hear how Jesus fulfills his mission to die to save sinners.

It was Good Friday, four years ago, and I was standing in the pews at St. John the Baptist Church in Bancroft, IA, the parish church that I grew up in and have many fond memories of. It is where I received the gifts of Baptism, First Communion, and Confirmation. We were visiting my parents and I had lost my brother, Greg, less than 6 months prior. Father Sunny, the pastor at the time, was leading the Stations of the Cross after the Good Friday service. When he was praying the 12th Station (Jesus dies on the Cross) out loud, I had this strong interior awareness. It was as if Jesus was saying to me that not only would I die willingly to fulfill the will of the Father, but I would die willingly because I love you and would do anything for you." That same message he has for each of us. That is why I try to do Stations of the Cross now, because it reminds me of the gift of Jesus' divine love for each of us and the saving work that he accomplished; the gift to my memory and to my heart; and it reminds me to share the gift. But I fall short and sometimes I am frustrated that, through human weakness or personal sin, I fail to love as Jesus loved and loves. But He loves us anyway. My prayer is that I will do my best to serve him so that I may be with Him. This theme is planted in the Gospel today. Jesus says, "Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there also will my servant be."

Perhaps one of our goals during the remaining week of Lent could be to examine our identity as Christians – to match *our* mission to our identity. What is our mission? The mission that we choose affects those around us, it will be the legacy we leave behind, and it will define us for eternity. Do we follow our passions or seek to serve Jesus? To love or not to love, that is the question!

Jesus teaches us that the "Son of Man" did not come to be served but to serve – and serve he did. Greatest in the kingdom of heaven is the one who loves much. The first shall be last and the last shall be first. In other words when we put others before ourselves, then we

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fulfill the law of God and we can be assured that our mission matches our identity as Baptized Christians – “I will place the law within their hearts... and they shall know Me”, from the prophet Jeremiah.

Our mission of being under the mission of Christ is under attack. We must clearly define our mission because if we do not the world will define it for us – and it won't be a Godly mission. Our mission simply entails using the unique gifts that God has given us and continues to give us for the benefit of others – to love God and love our neighbor as ourselves – the greatest commandment. As members of the Body of Christ, the Church/the Body of Christ needs us to use our unique gifts. If we are not using our unique gifts the Church/the Body of Christ is not whole (refer to 1 Corinthians Chp 12).

Phillip, one of the twelve, “saw” Jesus. Are we, like Phillip, leading others to Jesus, by our words, by our actions, and by saying no to sin? Lent is a good time to evaluate each of our own unique missions that God has given to us. You and I can only determine our unique missions through daily prayer. We are like the Greeks who say to Philip, “Sir, we want to see Jesus. Abba, I want to see Jesus. Prayer helps us to “see” Jesus. In prayer, we see Jesus, he loves us, and his love compels us to complete the mission that he gives each one of us.

Practically speaking we need to be realistic - take baby steps in our spiritual growth, so as to not become burned out/discouraged. If you do not have a daily prayer routine, St. Ignatius' Examine is a perhaps appealing: 1) Ask God for light - I want to look at my day with God's eyes, not merely my own. 2) Give thanks - The day I have just lived is a gift from God. Be grateful for it. 3) Review the day. I carefully look back on the day just completed, being guided by the Holy Spirit. 4) Face your shortcomings - I face up to what is wrong—in my life and in me. 5) Look toward the day to come. I ask where I need God in the day to come.

In daily prayer and with God's help our mission will daily align with his mission. Let us pray that God will stir up into flame the Holy Spirit who dwells in our hearts, to aide in carrying out the unique mission God has given each one of us as members of the Body of Christ. So, is *your* mission a mission of love?

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