

Spiritual Food

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Content

1. Is Anyone Listening?pg 2
2. Three Invitationspg 4
3. Inclusive Discipleshippg 6
4. Bearing The Image Of God ...pg 9





“Is Anyone Listening?”

In today's Gospel, Luke's account of the beginning of Jesus' ministry has declared that this prophecy has now been fulfilled:

"Today this Scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing."

He is in effect announcing his own claim to be God's chosen one for the liberation of his people.

The reading from Corinthians is, of course, St. Paul's reflection on Love. It is found in that part of the First Letter to the Corinthians where Paul speaks about the nature of the Christian community to the church of Corinth,

which was divided over many issues. Over the last few weeks, we have listened to Paul's words as he presented his teachings concerning the various gifts of the members of the community. He points out that all gifts flow from the Holy Spirit. To one the Spirit gives the gift of wisdom. To another he gives the gift of understanding. Some can work miracles. Others can prophecy. All the members of the Church are gifted with different talents; one gift is not more important than another, one member of the community is not more important than another. Together, all with their gifts compose the unified Body of Christ. And of course, those gifts mean nothing unless there is Love.





“Three Invitations”

All three readings today have a similar theme. They all recount individuals being called to the service of God.

Each of these three stories tells of different ways in which the loving presence of God changed people's lives.

The important point common to all three stories is that it's not the call the counts. It's how each person, Isaiah, Paul, Peter, James or John react to their calling. These men accepted the invitation - despite their sense of unworthiness - and if we do the same, then our lives are can be as fulfilling as theirs.

Confronted by the challenges of life today and a culture often in opposition

to the Gospel, modern day disciples of Christ can easily resort to moralistic preaching. But to be a church in witness requires an experience of the surprising, forgiving and overwhelming love of God. Only then can we all say, “Here I am, send me.”





“Inclusive Discipleship”

Keeping the commandments of God, and living according to the Gospel of Jesus is not just a matter of personal holiness or of intellectual or spiritual values. If the gift of faith enables us to hear the Word of God and live by it, then we are expected to share that gift with real people – every day and in every circumstance.

Jesus shows us - by word and deed - just exactly how we are to live the "good news:" share your bread with the hungry, shelter the oppressed and the homeless, clothe the naked... stop condemning and you will not be condemned... forgive and you will be forgiven... give, and gifts will be given to you."

If we listen carefully to the words of Jesus, it is very clear that he wants us to exclude no one from our love - not the beggar, the borrower, the adulteress, the leper, the widow, the poor, the orphan, the enemy. Each of us can make our own list of the "most unwanted", those whom we find most difficult to forgive, to feel sympathy for, to offer compassion to.

Living the Gospel is a constant challenge. It makes us re-examine our mental attitudes, our actions, our speech, and many of the prejudices we grow up with. Hopefully, as we prepare for the Season of Lent, we will continue to be more sensitive to the ways that we exclude certain people from the embrace of our affection. We will constantly try to resist deep-rooted suspicions we nurture against persons who, in some way, are "different" from us. Hopefully, we can

grow into becoming more fully authentic disciples.





“Bearing the Image of God”

The basic paradox that is at the heart of the Christian Gospel - death leading to life, darkness giving way to light, suffering as the road to glory.

When we love our neighbour as ourselves, we are loving those who themselves are unique reflections of the presence of God. We cannot love God and be indifferent to others. We have to learn how to love those who are not perfect. We have to learn how to love those who are outcasts. We have to learn how to love those we might feel very naturally repelled by. What Jesus says in the Gospel is that there is no way we can claim to love God without being accountable to love and serve others.

At the heart of the Gospel message, we have a reminder of how we are to accomplish this and how we are to love. The complete picture found in Scripture keeps going back to the fact that we can't do this on our own. We have to be in a disposition where we are radically open to a Spirit of love that lives and breathes inside each of us.

Our task is to take on the image of God, day by day, every day - so that we will always see something we have never seen before. It's all about listening with open ears and a fresh heart. It is about crossing over into uncharted lands. It is about constant, interior conversion.

*It is about a Kingdom based on Love:
Love of God and Love of Neighbour.*

