

2nd Sunday Ordinary Time Cycle A Homily

Isaiah 60:1-6 * Psalm 25:4-5ab, 6-7, 8-9, 10, 14 * Acts of the Apostles 2:42-47 * Matthew 18:15-20

The first reading today from Isaiah dates to roughly 500 years before Christ. The Jewish people were returning from the Babylonian exile and things had not really gone as people would have hoped. The prophet Isaiah is reminding them that in spite of the darkness and difficulty the Lord shines upon them and appears over them in glory.

In the second reading from the Acts of the Apostles, the people were living a communal life where they shared everything and prayed together. Everyone was given according to their need and each day more people were being saved.

Then finally in the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus is talking about fraternal correction and accountability, forgiveness and reconciliation. Then he says wherever 2 or 3 are gathered in my name, I am in their midst.

This year the Richmond Diocese (that includes us) is celebrating 200 years of existence. And if you read the history it has not been an easy road. There has been much difficulty along the way and the road remains difficult in many ways even today. We might feel like the Jewish people in the first reading where things have not gone as we had hoped or planned. Yet the Prophet Isaiah speaks to us TODAY, RIGHT NOW, to let us know that the Lord does shine upon us. And there are so many ways to express how God shines upon us, but I want to focus on just one today. That one way is YOU. Each one of you make up the community that was talked about in the second reading today. And as I get to know the people of our parish, I learn more and more what it means to be Church. And we are not a community that is alone, but we are a part of the universal church from right here in Hampton and going all the way around the world. We are all church. And as church, we are called to be sacrament to the world. And some may say, I get it, we have the Eucharist, we have reconciliation, anointing of the sick, baptism, holy orders, confirmation, and marriage. The big 7 sacraments. And you would be right. But let's take a look at what the word sacrament means. It has 4 parts. The first part of a sacrament is that it is efficacious. This means it does something. Sort of like when you see a stop sign, you stop! The second part of the definition of sacrament is they were instituted by Christ. The third part of the definition is entrusted to the church to give grace. And grace is gift from God. So let's put this all together. Sacrament is an efficacious sign, instituted by Christ, entrusted to the Church to give grace. So going back to Church as a sacrament, the Church is a visible sign that does something, started by Christ, entrusted to us (we are the church) to give grace. And we as Church are not just the seven sacraments but so much more. Every ministry in our parish, every time we visit someone, every time we feed the homeless, raise money for a good cause, provide for a family, we are being sacrament because God's grace is flowing through us! Remember, in the Gospel reading that wherever 2 or 3 are gathered in my name, I am in their midst. Jesus is in the midst of our ministry. But let's take it one step further. Have you every thought about the fact that you are sacrament. YOU are sacrament. You are an outward sign that does something, you were instituted by Christ via your baptism, you are the church, and through your work and your relationships, the grace of God flows. If you are married, you are sacrament to your spouse. If you are a parent, you are sacrament to your children, if you are a caregiver, you are sacrament to the elderly or dying, If you invite someone to church, you are sacrament to those searching for God, if you feed the needy or the homeless, you are being sacrament to Jesus – for this is where we find Him – the corporeal works of mercy, when you spend time helping a friend through instruction or correction, you are being sacrament because you are living out the spiritual works of mercy. You participate in the divine mission of Christ...you are a conduit of your creator's grace. You are that light that shines – the star that Monsignor talked about 2 weeks ago. You are the change that Father Dan talked about last week because you are efficacious – you are doing something that is bringing about the love of God to the world. A couple of weeks ago we started a series on the Holy Spirit. I invite you to check the bulletin for the dates of this series. It is on Sunday at 930 between the Masses. Please join us in Cordier Hall. The Holy Spirit is the love of God poured out. Every time we are sacrament, the love of God is poured out through us onto those around us.

Our ability to be sacrament is based on our own spirituality – our relationship with Jesus. The closer we are to Him, the more efficacious we are at letting the love of God flow through us. One way we grow closer to Jesus is through each other in the community. When we spend time with one another as the Body of Christ, we grow more in love with Jesus because we experience the gifts and charisms of those in our community. Monsignor has asked me and my wife Debbie to head up community life. We are both very excited! Our basic role is to serve the needs of all the ministries in our parish in any way possible. If you have been looking for a way to get involved, please come see us or send us an email and we will get back with you. If you have a specific need in your ministry, come see us or email us. If you are not involved in the community, I am inviting you to take part in some way – please come and talk with us. It does not have to be a huge time commitment. There are so many ways for the love of God to flow through our church community.

Each week we receive the Eucharist which is the ultimate sign of what it means to be community and to be family. As we approach the Lord today, as we receive Him into our very being, let us pray that the love of God may pour down upon us, upon our community and upon the whole world. I will close with the words to a song called “take my life and let it be”...

Take my life and let it be ... Consecrated, Lord, to Thee
Take my moments and my days ... Let them flow in ceaseless praise
Take my hands and let them move ... At the impulse of Thy love
Take my feet and let them be swift and beautiful for Thee

Take my voice and let me sing always, only, for my King
Take my lips and let them be filled with messages from Thee
Take my silver and my gold, not a mite would I withhold
Take my intellect and use every power as You choose

Take my love, my Lord
I pour at Your feet its treasure store
Take myself and I will be ever, only, all for Thee

Here am I ... All of me
Take my life ... It's all for Thee

Take my life and let it be
Consecrated, Lord, to Thee