



Christ in Our Neighborhood

January 15, 2023

Prayer

Pour forth, we beseech Thee, O Lord,
Thy grace into our hearts, that we to whom the Incarnation
of Christ Thy Son was made known by the message of an
angel, may by His Passion and Cross be brought to
the glory of His Resurrection, who lives and reigns with
Thee and the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever.
Amen.

Commentary

2nd Reading: 1 Corinthians 1:1-3

Our second reading continues in the same vein as the first, reminding us of the universality of God’s call to salvation, and reminding the believers in Corinth to stay united with one another in all truth, “with all those everywhere who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours.”

Commentary

1st Reading: Isaiah 49:3, 5-6

While all of us are indeed called to be “a light to the nations” in our own lives, in a special way this is something that is accomplished by Jesus, who now begins His public ministry that will ultimately lead to His death on the Cross.

Here in our first reading, God the Father is speaking to his Son, declaring, “I will make you a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth.”

God’s plan for salvation is universal: it is meant for all people and all nations. We do not get to pick and choose who gets to hear the good news of Jesus; we do not get to decide who gets to receive the gift of eternal life that God freely offers to all of us. We are all called to follow the example of Jesus to bring God’s light to the people we encounter, to the people who maybe no one else can touch quite like we can.

Question

How is God calling me to share in His ministry by being “a light to the nations” to the people in my life?

2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time

The Church in Corinth, as we find from the rest of 1 Corinthians, really struggled to remain united with one another, instead breaking off into factions and constantly competing with each other, as if receiving God’s grace was a contest that we win or lose – “if you have God’s blessing, then I can’t have it.” By reminding the Christians

in Corinth that they “have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be holy,” St. Paul is reminding them to be one with each other and to not view the Christian life as a competition between them and other Christians.

Question

Do I look for ways to be united with my brothers and sisters in Christ, or do I look for reasons to cause division?

As we transition from the Christmas season into Ordinary Time, we reflect on the missions of John the Baptist and Jesus the Christ.

By pointing out Jesus as the Lamb of God, the Baptist reminds us that his mission was always meant as a temporary one, a sort of place holder, and that the real work of our redemption and salvation is going to be accomplished by Jesus.

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Commentary

Gospel: John 1:29-34

This Gospel is, in effect, the demarcation line between John's ministry and Jesus': It is where John's ministry begins to decline, and Jesus' ministry begins.

In John's Gospel, John the Baptist's declaration of Jesus' true identity comes the day after his baptism, and two days before the wedding at Cana, where Jesus performs his first public miracle.

John emphasizes that his mission to prepare the way for Jesus is all but over since Jesus is at last beginning His mission to save us from our sins. He accepts this change in his life and in his ministry joyfully, even though it was probably hard for him to go from being an immensely popular prophet to being a complete afterthought.

Often in our lives we are faced with a similar dilemma: God's plan for our lives does not match up with what we thought it would be or should be. Those times that God is calling us to something altogether different than what we had planned, we need to ask for the grace to say, with John the Baptist, "Jesus Christ must increase; I must decrease." (Jn 3). And when we do so, we should always keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"

Question

What are the areas in my life where I need to decrease so that Jesus can increase?

This Week's Task

Try to come up with one small way that you can "decrease" this week so that Jesus can increase. This sacrifice can be very small, but it should be concrete.

Maybe you can share in Jesus' mission to be "a light to the world" by inviting someone to church, or to your Christ in Our Neighborhood group.

However it is that Jesus is asking you to "decrease" for Him, pray for the grace to do so joyfully!

Group Prayer

Using the words of John the Baptist, the group prays:

Lamb of God, You take away the sins of the world. Have mercy on us!

Lamb of God, You take away the sins of the world. Have mercy on us!

Lamb of God, You take away the sins of the world. Grant us peace!

Continue with Psalm 40

Psalm

Response: Here am I, Lord; I come to do your will.

I have waited, waited for the LORD,
and he stooped toward me and heard my cry.

And he put a new song into my mouth,
a hymn to our God.

R. Here am I, Lord; I come to do your will.

Sacrifice or offering you wished not,
but ears open to obedience you gave me.
Holocausts or sin-offerings you sought not;
then said I, "Behold I come."

R. Here I am, Lord; I come to do your will.

"In the written scroll it is prescribed for me,
to do your will, O my God, is my delight,
and your law is within my heart!"

R. Here am I, Lord; I come to do your will.

I announced your justice in the vast assembly;
I did not restrain my lips, as you, O LORD, know.

R. Here am I, Lord; I come to do your will.

Conclude with an Our Father