



Christ in Our Neighborhood

Prayer

Father, we believe that Jesus Christ is your Only Begotten Son and, through Him, we have eternal life. By the power of the Holy Spirit, who makes Christ known, may we always abide in Your love and find our place with You in heaven. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Commentary

1st Reading: Isaiah 35:4-7

“Who Am I?” This is the question Jesus poses to his disciples (see next Sunday’s Gospel). It is also the question we must ask ourselves. Over the next 6 weeks we will address the question, “Who Am I?”

Our first reading gives us the wonderful opportunity to prepare ourselves to address this 6 week theme.

Isaiah prophesies that, when the Lord comes, great miracles will occur. He gives a list of miracles that will happen upon the Lord’s arrival; among them, “the blind will see and the deaf will hear.” As Christians, we know that the Lord has come and miracles have occurred as proof of His presence among us.

Recognizing His presence, we discover more about ourselves in relation to Christ and His Church.

As we consider our theme, “Who Am I,” you are invited to use your eyes and ears that have been opened through faith and baptism in order to discover the true identity of Christ, yourself, and our Church.

Question

In what way do you see and hear the Lord present in your life?

Commentary

2nd Reading: James 2:1-5

In the Letter of St. James, we read that we are to “adhere to the faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ.” Previously (Weeks 13-16), we had focused on the virtue of Faith. It is this virtue that we will use over the next 6 weeks in order to address the identity of Christ.

Our Christian faith gives us “new eyes and new ears” to see our Lord in new ways. We know, for example, that Jesus chose to be poor -- being born in a stable, having nowhere to lay his head during his ministry, and hanging out with common fishermen,

prostitutes, and sinners.

Our faith recognizes that our God stepped down from His rightful throne to become one with us. Therefore, St. James expects us to follow suit. He challenges us to step off of our self-made perches and thrones and “show no partiality.”

Generally speaking, the wealthy and the poor are invited to enter through the doors of our churches and there is no partiality. However, how do we show no partiality when we leave church? As Christians, we are heirs to the Kingdom of God. But, if God has taken a lowly state, then how can we attempt to exalt ourselves?

Question

Are you impartial when it comes to spending time with others?

Visit our website:
dphx.org/Christ-in-our-neighborhood

You may wish to start your own Christ in Our Neighborhood group. Help other parishioners, friends, or family members become engaged in their faith. Check out our website today!

Commentary

Gospel: Mark 7:31-37

The Gospel of Mark is filled with miracles. This week's passage is no exception. Tied nicely to our first reading, we see Isaiah's prophecy fulfilled as a deaf man with a speech impediment is cured. At the hands of Jesus, "immediately the man's ears were opened, his speech impediment was removed, and he spoke plainly."

Curiously, Jesus warns the people not to tell anyone. This warning is unique to the Gospel of Mark who, according to scripture scholars, unveils the identity of the Lord in his Gospel account slowly and deliberately. Called, the "Messianic Secret," the identity of Jesus as King (Messiah in Hebrew and Christ in Greek) in Mark's Gospel will only be fully known when he dies on the cross.

Jesus' warning has a purpose. He does not want the people to make him out to be a king in the worldly sense — powerful and mighty. However, after Jesus' stern warning not to tell anyone about the miracle, they go out and proclaim the news anyway. Naturally, if we saw such a miracle, we would be hard pressed to keep it a secret.

Question

Considering Jesus' warning, how would you have reacted to the miracle witnessed in the Gospel today?

This Week's Task

There is a secret about you that must be shared. Did you know that when you were baptized, you were born again? No longer are you merely a person with a body and soul. You also have a share in the divine nature of Christ who humbled Himself to share in our human nature. When you are out at dinner or lunch, make a sign of the cross and say a prayer. Share your secret in a visible way. Let others know you are a Christian.

Prayer

The group offers this prayer which is adapted from the Rite of Baptism:

Almighty God,

You have given us a new birth by water and the Holy Spirit.

Generously bless all of us who are your adopted children.

May we always live as your sons and daughters who, through Grace, have a share in the Divine nature of your Son, Jesus.

May we grow to be more fully like Him, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, One God, forever and ever. Amen.

The prayer continues with Psalm 146

Psalm

Response: Praise the Lord, my soul!

The God of Jacob keeps faith forever,
secures justice for the oppressed,
gives food to the hungry.
The LORD sets captives free.

R. Praise the Lord, my soul!

The LORD gives sight to the blind;
the LORD raises up those who were bowed down.
The LORD loves the just;
the LORD protects strangers.

R. Praise the Lord, my soul!

The fatherless and the widow the LORD sustains,
but the way of the wicked he thwarts.
The LORD shall reign forever;
your God, O Zion, through all generations. Alleluia.

R. Praise the Lord, my soul!

Conclude with an Our Father