

Daily Prayer

Saint John, Apostle and Evangelist

Wednesday, May 6, 2020

We enter into a time of quiet. We offer to God our selves and in the silence know that God embraces us as God's very own. We offer to God our hopes and our concerns through our prayers and in the silence listen for God. Today we honour St John, Apostle and Evangelist.

We begin by saying

The word of the cross is the power of God
to us who are being saved

See 1 Corinthians 1.18

The Psalm

It is a good thing to give thanks to the Lord, *
and to sing praises to your name, O Most High;
To tell of your loving-kindness early in the morning *
and of your faithfulness in the night season;
My eyes also gloat over my enemies, *
and my ears rejoice to hear the doom of the wicked who
rise up against me.
The righteous shall flourish like a palm tree, *
and shall spread abroad like a cedar of Lebanon.
Those who are planted in the house of the Lord *
shall flourish in the courts of our God;
They shall still bear fruit in old age; *
they shall be green and succulent;
That they may show how upright the Lord is, *
my rock, in whom there is no fault.

Psalm 92.1-2, 11-14

The Reading

We continue with the reading and the reflection that follows. In silence we ask what the reading has to say to us today. Is there something in the reflection that draws us more deeply into the reading? What does God have to say to us? What do we have to ask God?

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, 'They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.' Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went towards the tomb. The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed. *John 20.1-8*

The Reflection

Paul MacLean

'In the beginning was the Word ...' I associate these words and the compelling, mysterious verses that follow with Christmas Eve, when I would hear them read and wonder over them each year. It's far easier to get a grip on a story, such as the shepherds and the angels in Luke, and even if you miss the deeper meanings, you still have the narrative to hang onto. But the beginning of the Fourth Gospel just dives straight into deep levels, associating the birth of Jesus with the opening of Genesis and the creation of the world, with the role of the female figure of Wisdom who is with God taking delight in the act of creation, and yes with that ordering, dynamic

principle of the Logos, central to Greek philosophy. The shepherds don't really get a look in. And each Christmas Eve we are drawn into all these associations through the symbol of light, coming into the world, not being overcome by the darkness, attracting us to its beamed pathway. Mysterious, compelling.

So, today we are commemorating the writer of those words and the Gospel that follows, John the evangelist. We are also uniting our prayers with John the Apostle, one of the two brothers called by Jesus the 'sons of thunder', who were fishermen before they left their nets to follow him. There are early traditions and much scholarly speculation that claim these two Johns are one and the same, and also encompass that unnamed figure, the beloved disciple. There is the argument that the Gospel was composed by a number of hands over a period of time and within a Christian community that had a unique experience of and perspective on Jesus, his relationship with the Father and the ongoing community of followers he left behind. However, to venture into the morass of the authorship question risks missing the value these ancient texts and their author(s) open up for our own life of faith today. What is handed down to us about being an apostle (one who is sent) and an evangelist (one who proclaims the Good News)?

A startling observation from this Gospel is that 'John the Evangelist' speaks only of two 'apostles', and they are both women! (the verb 'to send', *apostello*, is used of them). Yes, you can guess one - Mary Magdalene, who is 'sent' to announce the resurrection of Jesus to the disciples after encountering him in the garden outside the tomb. This 'sending' occurs after the crucial exchange in which she mistakes him for the gardener, but then recognizes him when he calls her name, 'Mary!' We are immediately reminded of Jesus as the Good Shepherd who knows his sheep and is known by them, and who calls them by name and they recognize his voice. It's this

personal relationship, the sense of being known and valued at the core of our being, that is the foundation of being an apostle. It's not just that Jesus is alive, but that the relationships he established, nurtured and deepened have not been destroyed by his death. And so, being an apostle is sharing not just the news, but expanding the circle of friends. When we consider that the important leaders of the early Christian communities were usually identified as apostles, who (with the exception of Paul) were men who had lived with and touched the earthly Jesus, it's quite radical to give this title to a woman follower, and to have her be the first to experience the presence of the risen Lord, and furthermore be the one who animates the rest. At the very least, meditating on this fact has led me to an ever growing appreciation for the ministry and leadership of women, particularly in their gifts for community creation and development, which seem to be affirmed in this resurrection story of new life.

But perhaps you got stymied on who that second female apostle could be? Well, she is the woman with all those serial husbands and men in her life who met Jesus at the well, and beginning with a simple request for water, enters into an ever-deepening dialogue on what is going to satisfy our deepest thirsts and longings. She comes to a deep appreciation of who Jesus is - that is, he has a special relationship with God that defines his identity - and also she is 'known' - somehow Jesus had discerned without judgement her own intimate relationships and reputation in the town. It's out of this encounter that she goes back to her town and convinces her neighbours that they must come and see for themselves what she has experienced. Given the patriarchal culture, it's absolutely remarkable that this woman (who must have been a force of nature herself with a great capacity for survival) would be an unlikely apostle who was the catalyst for bringing the whole town

into a relationship with Jesus. They started by taking her word, and inviting Jesus to stay with them, then they found out for themselves who he was. Mary Magdalene goes with the good news of the resurrection to that intimate group of Jesus' followers who knew him well. The Samaritan woman at the well brings a foreigner into her town, crossing gender, social, political and religious boundaries to do so. Both have the courage that comes from an I-Thou relationship, knowing and being known at our deepest personal level. Both are apostles and also evangelists, one to the nascent Christian community, the other to an historically hostile audience.

So, we go back to the Prologue to the Fourth Gospel read on Christmas Eve with its description of the Word made flesh, coming to dwell among us, and all of us seeing his glory, full of grace and truth. We can only see these things when they are shown to us by another person, someone who has experienced them for themselves, who then leads us into a place where we too can have that experience of personal transformation. John the apostle, a leader in the early Christian community was such a person. John the evangelist, or a community with a number of writers and editors who share his name, shared the Good News in the Gospel that goes the heart of faith even today. And in that Gospel we have two further apostles and evangelists who expand our horizons of who can perform those functions, how faith is shared and resurrection community is formed.

When the time is right, we conclude our time of silence with the canticle

The Canticle ~ Song of Creation 3

Invocation

Glorify the Lord, all you works of the Lord, *
praise him and highly exalt him for ever.

In the firmament of his power, glorify the Lord, *
praise him and highly exalt him for ever.

The People of God

Let the people of God glorify the Lord, *
praise him and highly exalt him for ever.

Glorify the Lord, O priests and servants of the Lord, *
praise him and highly exalt him for ever.

Glorify the Lord, O spirits and souls of the righteous, *
praise him and highly exalt him for ever.

You that are holy and humble of heart, glorify the Lord, *
praise him and highly exalt him for ever.

Doxology

Let us glorify the Lord: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; *
praise him and highly exalt him for ever.

In the firmament of his power, glorify the Lord, *
praise him and highly exalt him for ever.

Song of the Three 35-36, 61-65

We continue in prayer for those people and situations that we hold up before God (The Intercessions) and continue with the concluding collect, the Lord's prayer and the closing sentences.

The Intercessions

Let us pray to the Lord,
who is our refuge and stronghold.

For the health and well-being of our nation,
that all who are fearful and anxious
may be at peace and free from worry:

Lord, hear us,

Lord, graciously hear us.

For the isolated and housebound,
that we may be alert to their needs,
and care for them in their vulnerability:

Lord, hear us,

Lord, graciously hear us.

For our homes and families,
our schools and young people,
and all in any kind of need or distress:

Lord, hear us,

Lord, graciously hear us.

For a blessing on our local community,
that our neighbourhoods may be places of trust and friendship,
where all are known and cared for:

Lord, hear us,

Lord, graciously hear us.

We commend ourselves, and all for whom we pray,
to the mercy and protection of God.

Merciful Father,

accept these prayers

for the sake of your Son,

our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

We conclude our prayers

Shed upon your Church, O Lord,
the brightness of your light,
that we being illumined by the teaching
of your apostle and evangelist John,
may walk in the light of your truth,
and come at last to the fullness of eternal life;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

[let us pray as our Saviour taught us,]

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins,
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial,
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours,
now and for ever. Amen

We conclude

Peace be to us all and love with faith,
from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
Amen. Alleluia.

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