

The Sunday Missive – January 16, 2022 The Second Sunday after the Epiphany

Hymn 542 Christ is the world's true light

Christ is the world's true light, its Captain of salvation,
The Day-star clear and bright of every man and nation;
New life, new hope awakes, where'er men own his sway;
Freedom her bondage breaks, and night is turned to day.

In Christ all races meet, their ancient feuds forgetting,
The whole round world complete, from sunrise to its setting:
When Christ is throned as Lord, men shall forsake their fear,
To ploughshare bear the sword, to pruning-hook the spear.

One Lord, in one great Name unite us all who own thee;
Cast out our pride and shame that hinder to enthrone thee;
The world has waited long, has travailed long in pain;
To heal its ancient wrong, come, Prince of Peace, and reign.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eHZ9CEZIQeM>

Collect of the Day

Almighty God, whose Son our Savior Jesus Christ is the light of the world: Grant that your people, illumined by your Word and Sacraments, may shine with the radiance of Christ's glory, that he may be known, worshiped, and obeyed to the ends of the earth; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

Isaiah 62:1-5

For Zion's sake I will not keep silent, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until her vindication shines out like the dawn, and

her salvation like a burning torch. The nations shall see your vindication, and all the kings your glory; and you shall be called by a new name that the mouth of the Lord will give. You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of your God. You shall no more be termed Forsaken, and your land shall no more be termed Desolate; but you shall be called My Delight Is in Her, and your land Married; for the Lord delights in you, and your land shall be married. For as a young woman marries a young man, so shall your builder marry you, and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you.

Psalm 36

Transgression speaks to the wicked deep in their hearts* ***There is no fear of God before their eyes.***

For they flatter themselves in their own eyes* ***That their iniquity cannot be found out and opposed.***

The words of their mouths are mischief and deceit* ***They have ceased to act wisely and do good.***

They plot mischief while on their beds* ***They are set on ways that do not reject evil.***

But your steadfast love, O Lord, extends to the heavens* ***Your faithfulness beyond the clouds.***

Your righteousness is like the mighty mountains* ***Your judgments are like the great deep.***

How precious is your steadfast love, O God* ***All people may take refuge in the shadow of your wings.***

For with you is the fountain of life* ***In your light we see light.***

Do not let the feet of the arrogant tread on us, O Lord* ***Nor the hands of the wicked drive our hopes away.***

1 Corinthians 12:1-11

Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed. You know that when you were pagans, you were enticed and led astray to idols that could not speak.

Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking by the Spirit of God ever says "Let Jesus be cursed!" and no one can say "Jesus is Lord" except by the Holy Spirit. Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses.

Hymn 533 How wondrous and great thy works

How wondrous and great thy works, God of praise!

How just, King of saints, and true are thy ways!

O who shall not fear thee, and honor thy Name?

Thou only art holy, thou only supreme.

To nations of earth thy light shall be shown;
their worship and vows shall come to thy throne:
thy truth and thy judgments shall spread all abroad,
till earth's every people confess thee their God.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZmrU-6wnMAk>

John 2:1-11

On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine." And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come." His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." Now standing there were six stone water jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to them, "Fill the jars with water." And they filled them up to the brim. He said to them, "Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward." So they took it. When the steward tasted the water that had become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward called the bridegroom and said to him, "Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now." Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

But for the Grace of God – Epiphany 2C

On that great day, says the Lord, you shall be called by a new name that the mouth of the Lord will give. Our readings today explore -- to what might seem the n'th degree -- the analogy of marriage as relationship with God. Many newlyweds do change their names, it's true, and many do not. But one hopes that whatever new identity we bear upon marrying includes that of the Well-considered and Committed: promisemakers who can be promise keepers.

One of my most revered teachers in the seminary was Sister Margaret Farley. She taught ethics. She is a Nun who believes in womens' ordination and a number of other freedoms some deem sinful, but she remains an (oft-scolded) Roman Catholic. My

favorite book of hers is about commitments, how to begin, keep and change them when necessary. Her 2006 book, *Just Love* brought criticism and censure from the Holy See for its thoughts about women's rights. Her latest is *Changing the Questions: Explorations in Christian Ethics* (2015).

Perhaps our true vocation as Christians is to be continually seeking commitments. We may think we know what we believe in, but, if success and longevity are not true measures -- as surely they cannot be -- our credulity must be based in our intentions and present activity. For, as humans, in addition to thinking and the pursuit of ideological purpose we are continually compelled to do things. We want something to live for and something to do. A great historian has reminded us that, for the most part, people do not willingly die for places, or for things, or even for other people. But we will die for ideas if we think we are pursuing them.

Now, it has been revealed: the grace of God has given us in Jesus Christ glorious, compelling, and sufficient, proof of an idea we don't have to die for -- although many have -- because death is no longer the issue. The issue is reconciliation, self-forgiveness, peace and compassion. It's an idea we can die with instead of for.

So, we must choose activities to pursue that idea, the main activity is charity, the realm of activity that mirrors the idea of love. How hard we the so-called "enlightened" in the West have fought to make it seem that love is subjective or multivalent or difficult or complicated. It isn't. Not because there aren't as many ways of love as there are people, but because love is always in and of the heart, where God resides. Thus, our primary activity is to exercise our hearts in the gentle life, through prayer and song and conversation and creative, nurturing endeavour, knowing God will do the rest. If we're trying even a little to be God's people, it means we will be making decisions and taking steps from the heart, and although lots of those decisions may prove to be wrong, we can trust that our efforts will ultimately be for the betterment of Creation. No matter how wrong we sometimes are, our

purpose, our meaning, our salvation is in the trying, the orientation towards the admonition of Jesus to love. By the grace of God we will observe carefully the preparation, the substance and the aftermath of our decisionmaking, and pray for the faith, the strength and the wit to make our decisions increasingly charitable, clever and pleasurable. That's how we try, because we know that's what God wants us to do: Care for the Poor, Take Care of the Planet, Have a Ball, rather than, say, Disenfranchise the Marginalized, Ignore the Poor, Consume the Earth and Party Like There's No Tomorrow.

This trying to do good is the commitment we make. Deciding to live this way is how we can marry life, how we can marry God. It is the undertaking that makes us "a crown of beauty in the hand of the Lord, a royal diadem in the hand of God" (which the dictionary tells me are the same thing, crown and diadem). It is certainly not our track record so far on this Earth. Our behavior has proved historically problematic to say the least. It still is. It has been said that every field in the world is a battlefield. Some are remembered, some long forgotten. Today's great battlefield seems to be on the cyber plane, a struggle between flat-out self-serving falsehoods and plain, wide-eyed, openhanded facts, all indiscriminately disseminated in the blink of an eye.

No, we are not yet crowns in God's diadem because of our behavior, but we can become so simply because of the desire in our hearts to be better. In the minds of those who have it, this desire is often accompanied by the determination to persevere in the face of seemingly ludicrous odds. We live and love even though we know we will suffer and die. We give and let live, even though we know that others will disagree with our choices, cast us out, even bring violence upon us, and often fail to send us thank-you notes.

This permanent conundrum, this paradoxical pain in the beam is what impresses God enough about us to want to call us holy. What makes God happy is the desire, the ability and the practice of

commitment amongst humanity. Commitment, that is, to care for, nurture, support and listen to one another. Then we are no longer called “Forsaken,” but instead begin a new life, in which our name becomes “My Delight Is in Him,” “My Delight is in Her,” and our life shall be lived as ones married; for the Lord delights in those who are married, just as long as their commitments continue with integrity. Just as one beloved person is married to another, so shall Creation embrace us, so shall God rejoice over us.

Commitments: Beginning, Keeping, Changing is the title of Professor, Sister Margaret Farley’s book. Changing, because she has accepted, as must all humanity accept, that things change. Her wisdom is in illuminating the forgiveness and direction that God offers when we have commitments that do not hold. How to change graciously when commitments are no longer purposeful and wholehearted is a question much in the news these days, as leaders dispute what seem like indisputable truths in our society, and in our knowledge of what is meant by charity, self-knowledge, wholeness and lasting peace.

We must carry forward the certain knowledge that God forgives the wrong, as long as their hearts mean well. One would think the luxuries of our standard of living have created enough space for us to make more godly, wise and compassionate decisions on subjects such as equal rights, a sustainable ecology and maintainable commitments to justice. And we do well to remember that our ways and our prosperity have been bought with the blood, sweat and tears of many of those very folk about whom our decisions have been cruel and deadly. Many a compromise will have to be negotiated and many a falsehood exposed; many a heart will have to undergo change if we are ever to suit our actions to God’s Word. And there is no high moral ground, even when the other fellow is wrong. Self-righteousness – like greatness is one luxury we can ill afford.

The Prayers of the People

Let us pray to God, who is made manifest in Jesus Christ, responding to “Lord, in your mercy” with “Hear our prayer.” As the prophet Isaiah rang out, “Arise, shine; for your light has come”; empower your Church, O God, to ring out the Good News of the Light of your son Jesus, which pierces even the deepest darkness. Lord, in your mercy, ***hear our prayer.***

As a star rose high into the nighttime sky to draw the nations to the Christ-child; send your blessing, O God, on this nation, and every nation, and draw the whole world to your peace and truth. Lord, in your mercy, ***hear our prayer.***

As John the Baptist guided throngs of people to the edge of the wilderness and baptized Jesus in the River Jordan, we pray that you would guide our country and our leaders to the ways of justice and righteousness. Lord, in your mercy, ***hear our prayer.***

As Jesus climbed the mountaintop, and proclaimed blessings on the people of the world; we pray for the sick and the distressed, the poor and the lame, all those in any need or trouble, especially Karen, Kyle, Carrie, Bill, are there others? _____ Lord, in your mercy, ***hear our prayer.***

As Jesus called his disciples to leave their nets and boats, and follow him; we pray for those we love who have followed Jesus to your Heavenly Kingdom. We pray for those who have died, especially those we name now, silently or aloud: _____ Give them your peace. Lord, in your mercy, ***hear our prayer.***

Lord Jesus, Light of the World, hear our prayers, and make us reflections of your Light, that the places of darkness in our world would be pierced by your Light, and that all nations would be drawn to you and be overwhelmed with joy. ***Amen.***

Hymn 778 We are all one in mission

We all are one in mission, we all are one in call,
Our varied gifts united by Christ, the Lord of all.
A single, great commission compels us from above
To plan and work together that all may know Christ's love.

We all are called for service to witness in God's name.
Our ministries are different, our purpose is the same:
To touch the lives of others by God's surprising grace,
So people of all nations may feel God's warm embrace.

We all behold one vision, a stark reality;
The steward of salvation was nailed upon a tree.
Yet resurrected Justice gives rise that we may share
Free reconciliation and hope amid despair.

Now let us be united and let our song be heard.
Now let us be a vessel for God's redeeming Word.
We all are one in mission, we all are one in call,
Our varied gifts united by Christ, the Lord of all.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yEz0ncXfdCU>

OR

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p_ohhIbM_Ag

Go in peace to follow the good road. Go without fear, for the One who made us will always be with us, and loves us like a good mother. And the blessing of Almighty God: Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer be with you this day and remain with you always. **Amen**

Velvet Shoes

Let us walk in the white snow
In a soundless space;
With footsteps quiet and slow,
At a tranquil pace,
Under veils of white lace.

I shall go shod in silk,
And you in wool,
White as white cow's milk,
More beautiful
Than the breast of a gull.

We shall walk through the still town
In a windless peace;
We shall step upon white down,
Upon silver fleece,
Upon softer than these.

We shall walk in velvet shoes:
Wherever we go
Silence will fall like dews
On white silence below.
We shall walk in the snow.

Elinor Wylie