

Commentary on the Gospel for Wed, Jan 6th 2016

Alleluia! We have received our greatest gift ever and now we settle in and start a new year.

Sometimes when I read my assignment for reflection, I think, “Oh my, how will I respond to that?”

But as I read today’s reading, I thought (with a sigh of relief), “easy.” I can understand the message of love and could reflect upon that for pages. Love made real is the form of a child to save us is in the forefront of our minds at this time of year.

John speaks so eloquently of God’s love for us. God is love . . . This says it all. Of course, in the chapter just before this John tells us just how much God loves us (the world). John 3:16 is probably my favorite verse in the entire Bible. It lays out this love that John continues to speak of throughout Chapter 4. I feel especially blessed with John 3:16 since my daughter was born on March 16 (3:16) – it was just a few years ago that I made that very personal connection. My daughter was in deep pain as she and her husband struggled to have a child. She was feeling so down on herself. I had found a small cross engraved with John 3:16 – I thought I would share this “revelation” with her and give her the cross the next time I saw her (she lives in a different state). I would explain that God so loved the world that he gave us his only son and that God so loved me that he gave me my daughter. I had hoped that the thought of her being a precious gift of love would renew her value of herself. But, I didn’t wait until we were face to face. Rather, during one of our telephone when she was so sad, I shared this “revelation.” I was not prepared for her reaction, she immediately answered that God did not love her since He did not give her a child. My heart ached as I searched for the right words, with the grace of God, I responded that I did not always give her everything she wanted at the time she wanted it, but I NEVER did not love her. While I can’t say that the conversation elicited the reaction I hoped for, miracles do happen. She did finally open her heart to God and now fully embraces God as the center of her life. For three years or more, she read Jesus calling daily. And just last week, as I was getting in the car with her beautiful 5-month old baby (who looks just like her on her first Christmas), I noticed the cross (with John 3:16) still on her key chain!! My heart smiled!!

John directs us to pass on this love that we have from God.

Beloved, if God so loved us,

we also must love one another.

No one has ever seen God.

Yet, if we love one another, God remains in us,

and his love is brought to perfection in us.

One of the “Ignatian values” is Finding God in all Things – seeing the evidence of God in all we do, in all whom we meet, in all of creation. The kindnesses that most show each other during the Christmas season makes this easier. The trick is how we carry this forward through the year. How do we continue to live the love so generously given to us? As the Responsorial psalm states, Lord, every

nation on earth will adore you. One way, we manifest that adoration is how we treat others, who are, indeed, children of God. A tough assignment that we (speaking for myself) need to work on everyday.

The gospel message is one of trust and faith – the disciples did not seem impressed with the feeding of the masses and did not appear to understand at all what is happening. They seem fearful yet the strong message to me (beyond believe!!) is that if Christ is in your life, we will find “calm seas.” Perhaps their hearts were hardened because it was too early for them to fully understand the coming of our Lord and implications of Jesus’s life and impending death.

I leave you with the words of Mother Teresa on love and Christmas:

"It is Christmas every time you let God love others through you."

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