

Saint Thomas of the Air Church
Second Sunday after Christmas
January 3, 2021
rmcneely+

grant that the same light enkindled in our hearts
may shine forth in our lives

The secular world ended and began a calendar year last week
We of the Christian world
Began our year in November with the First Sunday in Advent
Recalling the Birth of Our Lord
And looking ahead to His return to judge the World

What is it about new beginnings
that is so appealing to the human condition?
A new year seems liberating, cleansing.
As if the mere turning of a page in a calendar
Will blot out the worst of the old year
And will change our lives in the next.

We of Christianity know a different reality.
We know of the liberating and cleansing
Of our souls
Not by the flip of a page on a calendar but by
The Holy Eucharist
And the forgiveness of God
Each week of our lives.
When our sins are forgiven and a new life assured.
A new life.

The Collect for today is so very appropriate
It recognizes the light of Our Lord
That has been implanted in our hearts
With the blessing of the Nativity:
God with Us.

And we pray that that light
The love of God
The sacrifice of Jesus
The Word of God
Will show forth in our lives.
Will govern how we live our lives.

And then the Gospel for the day
Gives us the example of Joseph.
And how the light
Showed forth in his life.

We rarely consider Joseph in our Gospels.
He makes few but critical appearances
We know nothing of his words
He is never quoted in the New Testament.
And speaks not a word in scripture.

We know him in connection with the Nativity and one other story.
Joseph vanishes from the Bible
after the time when Jesus was 12 years old
and found in the temple after a 3 day absence.
Leading many to reason that Joseph died sometime later.

So we know Joseph more by what he did with his life than by what
he said.

In an era when sociologists cite the decline of fatherhood
As a cause for the decline of our society,
Joseph's example is edifying

He is above all, a man of God.
A man who knows and obeys the will and the word of God

The circumstances of Mary's pregnancy
Would have led a modern man,
A lesser man,
To abandon her.
In all likelihood she would have been stoned
And the baby Jesus, killed before His birth.

Joseph was assured in a dream
And he obeyed.
Saving the life of the Son of God

A few years later Joseph had a second dream.
And again he obeyed
And he saved the life of Jesus a second time
When he took the Holy Family to Egypt.

We can't help but think of the parallel
Another man named Joseph
Another dreamer
Who took in the sons of Jacob
And saved the 12 tribes of Israel
When he accepted them into Egypt during the famine in
Canaan.

A few years after his second dream Joseph had a third dream
And again he obeyed.
Returning Jesus and Mary to Nazareth
To safety as those who sought to kill Jesus were dead.

In his obedience Joseph showed us another of his traits
He was a protector.
And twice protected the Son of God
From the Jews and from Herod
Twice prevented the death of the young Jesus

Joseph was also a provider.

By his labor, Joseph put food on the table
and a roof over the heads of Mary and Jesus.

Warmth at night

A secure place to live and grow.

He provided the income they needed to survive.

We know that Jesus earned a living as a carpenter

A trade he most likely learned from Joseph.

Working side by side with him for years,

Until the young man Jesus could go out on his own.

So Joseph as a guide and mentor,

Established Jesus in a self sustaining trade

In the wake of the very effective

Woman's Liberation campaign

Of the last decades

The role of fatherhood can become blurred.

God gave us the example of Joseph

Obedient to the word of God

Protector

Provider

Leader and guide

Mentor to God's Son.

Joseph showed us with his life

What it meant to hold the light of God

In his heart

Occasionally literally in his arms

And to let that light shine in his life.

Is it any wonder that Joseph is seen by many

as the Patron Saint of fatherhood?

He is a shining example for us all

Men

Women

And children

Of a life led in harmony and in congruity with God's will

With the light of God in heart and soul

That shone forth in a life well lived.

In a rare Old Testament Lesson

Isaiah wrote of the work to be done

Work that he expected to perform

But words that were a prophecy of what Jesus would do

Some 730 years later.

But there is a back story that makes this Lesson even more powerful:

You may recall the occasion when Jesus was in the synagogue

In Nazareth

He was asked to read from the scroll

As He stood to read

The congregation grew silent.

In rapt attention.

When the scroll was handed to him

It was opened to the book of Isaiah

In fact to the very verses of today's Lesson

Jesus began to read:

“the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings
unto the meek

to bind up the brokenhearted

to proclaim liberty to the captives

to comfort all who mourn

to give unto them beauty for ashes

the oil of joy for mourning

the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness

that they may be called trees of righteousness

the planting of the Lord”

When He had finished
 He turned to them and said
 “This day is the scripture fulfilled in your ears.” (Lk4:21)
 The fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecy
 Stood before them in the person of Jesus, the Christ
 Who would, without exception
 Assiduously accomplish all that Isaiah had foretold.

Jesus lived the life that we model ourselves after
 With no hope of achieving.
 However, He is the meaning and the lesson for the day;
 The light of the Lord was His very being
 As the light of the Lord is enkindled in us.

He was the shining example
 And we make our feeble and human attempts
 To let that shining light direct our lives.

So let us enjoy the customs of our secular world
 Surrounding the New Year.
 The Champaign
 The fireworks, the music
 The virtual parties, parades and college football
 The ball drop in an empty Times Square
 The resolutions that will be kept for a few months
 Firm in the knowledge
 That as Christians
 We have a jump on the secular world
 We have a life renewed at each Eucharist
 A heart and soul constantly enlightened
 by the love of God
 by the Word of God
 by the forgiveness of God
 by the Son of God
 And a shining life lived by that light.

