

Saint Thomas and Saint Thomas of the Air Church  
Epiphany II  
January 14, 2024  
rmcneely+

The short Epiphany Season is to mark the manifestation of Christ  
To the World.

And so, we consider the history and the means  
by which He did that.

The Gospel for the day is St Mark's account of the beginning  
Of His remarkable 3 year ministry on Earth.

Mark begins his Gospel with the story of Jesus' baptism.  
It is a mysterious story  
Also reported by the other Gospels.  
It features the entire Trinity at work.  
The Holy Spirit in the form like as a dove,  
The voice of God  
And the Son of God.

And this outrageous character, John, the Baptist.

John looked strange, clothed in animal skins

He lived in the desert

Surviving on bugs and wild honey.

Not far from the spot where Elijah was taken up to heaven

In what the writers could only describe

As a chariot of fire.

John fulfilled the ancient prophecy of Isaiah

And the ancient prophecy of Micah.

So long anticipated by the Jews.

It is a perfect setting for Jesus to unfold and introduce Himself  
To the World.

St Mark's account is paired with St Paul's Epistle to the Romans  
 Which provides a perhaps more subtle  
 manifestation of Christ.

In contrast to the bold and dramatic baptism of Jesus  
 St Paul's writing is quiet and subtle.

Paul notes that each of us receive Gifts from God.

But not in the same measure

And not the same Gifts.

He goes on to set forth the manner in which we are to use  
 the Gifts of God  
 to achieve the Will of God in our lives.

In doing so, Paul describes a way of life

A way to make use of the various Gifts of God.

And thus, the Christian way of life

Meaningfully steeped in doctrine and theology.

The Epistle may, at first seem to be misplaced.

What is it doing in the short Epiphany Season?

When everything takes on such importance

Because of the few opportunities to present it.

To answer that question let's examine the life that Paul describes:

He lists examples of the gifts of God

Prophecy, Teaching, ministry, giving, leadership, mercy

With each gift he qualifies how we are to use it

With simplicity, that is: all your heart

Diligence

Cheerfulness.

Paul turns to a discussion of a life in Christ

In a fashion reminiscent of the Sermon on the Mount

That radical new way of life with Christ

He says Christian love must be without dissimulation  
Must be similar, without difference one person to another.  
Without hypocrisy.  
Abhor evil and cleave to that which is good.  
Sounds trite and over used to our 21<sup>st</sup> century ears  
But is that because of the fundamental truth of those words?  
He says Christian love is to prefer the needs of others before our  
own needs.  
Each of us of the Body, in Brotherly love,  
preferring one another over ourselves.  
We become interdependent upon each other  
With each of us counting the other  
as better than ourselves.

Not slothful in business  
Never lazy or idle in our life in Christ

We are to be fervent in spirit  
Burning with the love of God  
Aglow with the Holy Spirit alive in our works  
As we do the will of God in our lives.

Rejoicing in Hope  
The certain expectancy of life hereafter  
Patient in tribulation  
Knowing that everlasting life is before us.  
All the while persevering in prayer.

We must contribute to the necessities of the people of God  
The saints of this world  
The people who have separated themselves  
And dedicated themselves to God  
Just as you have done this day.

Can you hear the echoes of the Sermon on the Mount in this one:  
 Paul admonishes that we must bless those that persecute us  
     Another interpretation demands that we bless all persecutors  
     And curse them not.  
     Bless them that curse you  
     And pray for them, which despitefully use you.

Paul does not describe a stoic life  
     Remote from the emotions of life  
 He tells us to delve into life  
     rejoice with them that rejoice  
     And to weep with them that weep.  
 We are to be of one mind  
     One toward another.  
 Paul is not here saying that we must all agree  
     Or see everything eye to eye  
 This is different.

Paul is saying be of the same mind.  
 Let the mind be in us  
     That is also in Christ Jesus  
     Have the same regard for one another.  
     The same respect  
     The same love that Christ has for us.

Finally Paul instructs that we must not  
     Show pride in ourselves and disdain for others  
     Be not arrogant or supercilious  
     Or as in Proverbs: “Be not wise in our own conceits”

We are to condescend (not in the 21<sup>st</sup> century meaning), but  
     “Con” meaning “with” and “descend” meaning “down”  
     Or to descend with others  
     Of lower estate, manner or place  
     To serve the needs of people with less than ourselves.

Remember Jesus, who spent time with publicans and sinners

The life Paul describes is no simple existence.

The Christian life is not easy

It is demanding

And arduous

It is nothing we can achieve on our own.

So on this day in which the Church focuses us on the beginning of  
Our Lord's ministry

This mysterious beginning:

This day of His Baptism

By John, who baptized only with water

The washing away of sin from a sinless man

The descent of the Holy Spirit upon a man

Who Himself embodied the Holy Spirit

So on this day we contemplate our new life in the Christ

As Jesus manifested Himself for the first time at the River Jordan

Does not He manifest Himself every day since then

In us?

In the way we live our lives?

In the way we live a Christian life?

Is not that a beacon of light piercing the darkness?

There is no denying the power of that scene at the Jordan as Jesus  
rose up out of the water on that single day 2000 years ago.

But can we imagine the power

The manifestation

Of all those lives lived as Christians

Every day,

Ever since?

