

Gift Discipleship

January 4, 1998 - Epiphany, Cycle C

Epiphany 1998 Cycle C Isaiah 60:1-6 Ephesians 3:2-3,5-6 Matthews 2:1-12

Today we celebrate the Feast of the Epiphany. First, let's go to Matthew where we hear in Chapter 2 verse 11: When entering the house, they found the child with Mary, his mother, and they prostrated themselves and did him homage. The first thing we are called to do before we do anything else is to lay our lives before God. When you prostrate yourself -- I will never forget the day when I was ordained and when we're ordained to the diaconate or priesthood we go into the sanctuary and lay face down. I remember lying on the floor, my head on my hands saying, "Lord, I'm soon going to be a priest. I'm not worthy." To be so caught up in the moment of whose presence we are in -- that we are in the presence of Almighty God....

If you ever visit the Taize Community in France, Brother Roger -- it's a community of all denominations and as soon as he finds out that you're a Catholic or a priest, he will literally grab you by the arm and drag you into the tent where they have the Blessed Sacrament and fall on his knees and say, "Behold God!" We are in the presence of God. Sometimes I think we forget that we are truly in the presence of God physically. People say, "If Jesus Christ would appear to me, Father!" Well, what do you want? He's right here, completely God. We are in the presence of God. We all know that here, but does it click like "Wo-o, I am in God's presence completely and fully. So we need to acknowledge it.

Now that we believe that he's here, that the kings believe that he was here, let's go to the second reading in Ephesians, Chapter 3, verse 4- 6: When you read this you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to human beings in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit, that the Gentiles are coheirs, members of the same body, and copartners in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

Now what this means for us is that God is a God of all people, not just for certain people. All people must come to know his love. And that's what we need to focus on today. I've moved into Bread of Life Office this week because I believe we are going to become the center of evangelization. No matter what happens, we must burn, burn, for souls. When you leave here, pick up the prayer for the year 2000 put out by the Diocese of Erie and pray it everyday. It says here that most of the world has never even heard of Jesus Christ. Think about it. Only 32% of the world is Christian which means most of the world has never even heard of Jesus Christ. What are you doing about that? What am I doing about that?

It's like we're on a life raft. We're in a storm and the Titanic has just gone down. People are dying around us, but we're praising the Lord. Well, we have to stop for a moment and take care of our brothers and sisters. We have to start pulling them on to the raft or they're

going to drown, they're going to die. And most of the world is dying. Most of the people you're working with are dying and we must become more concerned about them than about our own selves. We have to be reaching out and pulling them into the lifeboat. The story goes that at the end of our lives Jesus is only going to ask us one question when we stand before him in judgment and that's going to be: Where are your brothers and sisters? Did you bring anybody with you? Are we consumed with bringing people to the Lord Jesus Christ?

One of my kids at Prep was one of the biggest pagans I ever had. He was a real pain for me in the beginning. Later he made a TEC retreat with me and had a complete conversion. He became so on fire for Jesus Christ, in his senior year he would take the boys in a deadlock and drag them into daily Mass telling them that they were weak and needed the Lord. At a prayer meeting for Prep students one night, the twenty who were there were asked how they came to know the Lord, and five of them said it was because of this student. Here is a senior in high school who brought five people along with him to the kingdom. How many people have you brought along with you to the kingdom?

If we're going to be like the three kings-- they went back and now all the world has heard of Jesus in some way or another because the Gospel has gone out to all nations. It's not just for the few; it's for the many and we have to be the one who proclaim this. I'm calling us today to become a parish of evangelization, that we become a parish that burns for souls, that we go and fulfill the great commission. The great commission is: Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations." That's the commission of Christ. It's not my word, not the church's word. That's the word of Jesus Christ. We need to become people who make disciples of all nations and we start that by making sure that we are disciples ourselves. A disciple falls down in adoration before God and has a deep and profound love of Jesus Christ.

The other day I went to the Carmelite Monastery and of course we can't see each other, but we recognize the voices and the Sister who answered the bell was not the regular one, Sister Christina. When I asked about Sister Christina, the Sister told me she was in the hospital with leukemia since November taking chemotherapy. "You know, Father," she said, "she's been such a witness, such a disciple of Jesus. One of the doctors is not a believer and he said, 'Sister, I've never been a believer, but I want to become one because of you.' She had such peace. When she was told that she had leukemia, she said, 'Well, I'm in a win-win situation.'" The doctor asked: 'What do you mean?' She said, 'If I die, I get to be with Jesus forever and if I live I get to go back to Carmel.' And she has never stopped smiling once."

Remember last week I told you to preach the gospel everyday and, if necessary, use words. Sister Christina is a disciple of Jesus Christ because she spends time with Christ everyday. She burns with love with Jesus. And all she wants to do is to carry that love out to everyone she meets. We are called today to humble ourselves before Jesus and truly to be his disciple and then to go forth and make disciples. By the end of next year this place should be packed with disciples that we have made for Jesus Christ.