

FIRST READING: 1 John 3:7-10

A reading from the first Letter of Saint John:

Children, let no one deceive you. The person who acts in righteousness is righteous, just as he is righteous. Whoever sins belongs to the Devil, because the Devil has sinned from the beginning. Indeed, the Son of God was revealed to destroy the works of the Devil. No one who is begotten by God commits sin, because God's seed remains in him; he cannot sin because he is begotten by God. In this way, the children of God and the children of the Devil are made plain; no one who fails to act in righteousness belongs to God, nor anyone who does not love his brother.

The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL: Psalm 98:1, 7-8, 9

All the ends of the earth have seen the saving power of God.

Sing to the LORD a new song, for he has done wondrous deeds; His right hand has won victory for him, his holy arm.

All the ends of the earth have seen the saving power of God.

Let the sea and what fills it resound, the world and those who dwell in it; Let the rivers clap their hands, the mountains shout with them for joy before the LORD.

All the ends of the earth have seen the saving power of God.

The LORD comes; he comes to rule the earth; He will rule the world with justice and the peoples with equity.

All the ends of the earth have seen the saving power of God.

GOSPEL: John 1:35-42

+ A reading from the holy Gospel according to John:

John was standing with two of his disciples, and as he watched Jesus walk by, he said, "Behold, the Lamb of God." The two disciples heard what he said and followed Jesus. Jesus turned and saw them following him and said to them, "What are you looking for?" They said to him, "Rabbi" (which translated means Teacher), "where are you staying?" He said to them, "Come, and you will see." So they went and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day. It was about four in the afternoon. Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, was one of the two who heard John and followed Jesus. He first found his own brother Simon and told him, "We have found the Messiah," which is translated Christ. Then he brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon the son of John; you will be called Cephas," which is translated Peter.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Reflection for Tuesday after Epiphany

The community of First John is the context for this letter. We can call it the Johannine Community. This first letter reflects the experience of a traumatic schism. When John writes about anti-Christ, of last week, and now the devil and sinners, to whom does he refer? Many scripture scholars maintain that his remarks are directed to those who have left the community. They are the sinners and godless ones of the devil. His words reflect the anguish

and pain of such trauma. They, those who left us, belong to the devil and we, who remain together, belong to God. This is the filter through which John has written. In approaching the content of today's reading, we need to take John's state of mind and heart into consideration to try to interpret his words.

Who are the ones who do not love their brother? What are John's sentiments to those who left? Don't his feelings betray his own sin? When we point a finger to accuse someone else, don't three more fingers point back at us? It seems as though John has forgotten that he is a sinner too. Perfection and righteousness are only of God. It is only in God's grace that anyone can act righteously and do good. Jesus told us to love our enemies and pray for those who hurt us. Jesus' words bear more weight than do John's or mine. Those of us who preach must hear and heed God's word before we open our mouths or put our words into a letter or reflection. Both John and I are sinners too.

This reminds me of what I learned from many trips to visit northern New Mexico. Only in New Mexico do native peoples live on their native land. They live in pueblos, and not reservations, where their ancestors lived for millennia after migrating into the area. Each tribe has a name. The tribal name, translated into English, always translates as The People. Members not of their tribe or clan are not true people. Only once, in history, did the northern tribes set aside tribal identity to unite. In doing so, their combined force pushed the Spanish conquistadores and their Mexican allies out of their lands back to Mexico. Their unity didn't last long and the Spaniards re-conquered New Mexico within twelve years.

I tell this story because tribal thinking has plagued the Church too. It is part of the human condition to think in terms of us and them. It's always easy to point at those who are not us. Yet the challenge of Jesus is to remember that salvation was not just for a few but the entire human race, created in God's image and likeness. Our challenge is to see Christ in all we meet including those with whom we disagree, our enemies and those we can't stand. That's the true sign of the depth of our faith in Jesus; they'll know we are Christian by our love for others.

Salvation is always offered to sinners. God will never turn a sinner away. God saves and forgives out of everlasting, infinite and unconditional love, compassion and mercy. Each of us faces our limits all the time. We can rely on God's love to become the people God wants us to be. We are always, as long as we live, on our life's journey. Our life begins as God's gift. When this life ends, as it will for us all, God's promise of eternal life is our goal. We come from God and return to God. These gifts are not just restricted to our own family, group or church. Jesus' cross and resurrection was for the entire human race. We are the ones who have limits; all things are possible for God.

It is only in God's grace that we strive for righteousness. Only with God's love can we love others. Only by his cross did Jesus defeat evil, sin and death. We can live in God's grace now. Eternal life and the Kingdom of God are yet to come. We hope and trust in God's love and in no earthly or secular power. We call this the Good News of Jesus; the gospel. Only God saves. Salvation comes, in God's time, to each of us, one person at a time. Jesus has changed us, who

believe, and not the world all at once. Salvation is offered as a gift, not an imposition. God offers us faith as a gift.

What led Andrew and Simon to Jesus? John's witness led Andrew to seek out Jesus. Andrew's invitation led Peter. They found Jesus and followed him. Their lives were changed into Jesus' disciples and would, after Easter and Pentecost, become transformed into Jesus' witnesses and missionaries. Today we call them apostles. I like this passage. In it John defines a few terms. Jesus is the promised Messiah. Messiah is a Hebrew word that is translated into Christ in Greek and the Anointed One in English. Rabbi, in Hebrew, means teacher in English. Cephas is Aramaic for Peter in Greek which is Rocky in English. Peter was Simon's nickname. Apostle, a Greek word, means missionary or one who gives witness to Jesus in English. Sometimes it's good to define our terms and learn their origin.

What has faith in Jesus done for us? How does salvation show in our actions and words toward others? We, like Andrew and Simon seek Jesus. We have found him as did they. It made all the difference in their lives. What difference does Jesus make in ours? We give witness to Jesus as well; in the grace of God.

May we bring Christ into a waiting world by all we do and say.

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