

The Sixth Sunday of Pentecost

June 22, 2008

Genesis 21:8-21

Psalm 86:1-10, 16-17

Romans 6:1b-11

Matthew 10:24-39

In the name of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

I have always supposed that one of the great attractions or selling points of the faith in the very earliest days of Christianity must have been that it had no secrets, nothing arcane or hidden. It was available and accessible to everyone: no secret passwords or handshakes, just one simple story about the love of God and the sacrifice made by Jesus Christ.

Of course, there was a rite of initiation, perhaps not at the very beginning but very early in the life of the Church. Just a few years after the Resurrection, Paul is telling the Christians at Rome that they are “united with Christ in Baptism.” Baptism was, and remains, the entry into the family of God, joining with Jesus as God’s sons and daughters. That’s not too strenuous an initiation, considering what it brings to us.

It brings salvation. To be “united with Christ” means that, just as Christ died to atone for our sins, we, with Him, die to sin; we are washed, cleansed, and born anew. That is the plain fact of the Christian faith.

The wonder of it is that it is a gift to us all. Paul spoke of the love of God in that when we, humanity, were still sinners, Christ made His

sacrifice for us. The sacrifice is unearned; we have nothing so valuable as to be given in exchange for His saving act upon the cross.

It is His gift to us because He loves us; we have value in God's eyes. We fret and fume and worry about the pains and surprises of life, sometimes losing sight of what is truly significant, truly important in life, and that is God's unqualified, inexhaustible love. "Fear not, you are of more value than many sparrows," means that we, created as we are by God, share in His love for His Creation.

That is what we are called to proclaim from the housetops.

That is what we are to proclaim to the world.

Realistically, however, proclamation has pitfalls; be aware that there is a cost; there may be conflict. You and I both know that there are people out there who cannot or will not or simply do not believe what we have to say.

Why?

For some people it's inertia: it's just too much trouble to hear and learn something new. If they believe the proclamation, they might have to make a commitment, and that's just too much bother.

Some people really do prefer a life of sin, strange as it sounds, and cannot imagine changing from the life, shallow and pointless as it may be, that gives ease and pleasure.

Some people just won't believe anything.

Do not be anxious! Your job is to tell the world the Good News of the Gospel message, the salvation of the faithful. God won't leave you out there struggling with the words to say and the courage to say them. His has been, is now, and will be your support and your guide.

In His Holy Name.