

The Second Sunday after the Epiphany, January 16, 2011
St. James Episcopal Church Tigard, OR
David Pero, Intern

Oh, Gracious One, open my lips and my mouth shall sing forth your praise. Amen [Psalm 51:17]

In the Church calendar, we are in the season of Epiphany. Epiphany—with a capital “E”—January 6th, also celebrated as “Three Kings Day” or Día de los Tres Reyes in the Spanish-speaking world. Jesus is revealed as the Messiah to the magi and to the non-Jewish world.

Today at Eucharist, listen to the Preface for the Season of Epiphany. (The Preface is that part in the beginning of the Eucharist where the celebrant reads something that you can’t follow.) Mother Raggs will say:

“Because in the mystery of the Word made flesh, you have caused a new light to shine in our hearts, to give the knowledge of your glory in the face of your Son Jesus Christ our Lord.”

The Collect for the Second Sunday After Epiphany (which Mother Raggs read at the beginning of the service) is:

Almighty God whose Son our Savior Jesus Christ is the light of the world: Grant that your people, illumined by your Word and Sacraments, may shine with the radiance of Christ’s glory, that he may be known, worshipped and obeyed to the ends of the earth...

An epiphany (small “e”) is an appearance, or manifestation, an “a-ha!” moment. Quite often we associate epiphanies with light—the light bulb shining over one’s head. The magi (or three kings) were lead by a star. Moses saw the burning bush. Saul of Tarsus (who became Paul) “saw a light from heaven”. At Jesus’ baptism, “the heavens opened”.

In these Biblical stories, the epiphanies or manifestations were the awakenings—the “a-ha!” moments—to a calling. The magi made a decision to travel from The East to worship the newborn king of the Jews; Moses to lead the Exodus; Paul to evangelize, and Jesus to begin his ministry of atonement. I have a calling. You have a calling..

Today’s Gospel reading is from the gospel according to John. In Luke’s gospel, Simon (also known as Peter, Cephas or Rock) meets Jesus after Simon and his crew had had a less than successful night of fishing. Jesus tells the fishermen to let down their nets again, and they catch so many fish that they need to call for help. Jesus tells Peter, “Do not be afraid, henceforth you will be catching people.” [Luke 5:10]

A calling...Moses had his calling to free the Israelites. What he was called to do, took him way outside his comfort zone. He made excuses to God: “They will not believe me or listen to my voice,” [Exodus 4:1] and “I am not eloquent...but I am slow of speech and of tongue.” [Exodus 4:10] Simon Peter constantly struggled with his calling, “Oh man of little faith, why do you doubt?” [Matthew 14:31] Jesus asked Peter after Peter, walking on the water began to sink. And remember Peter’s denial that he even knew Jesus while Jesus was being set up for execution. [Matthew 26:69 – 75; Mark 14:66-72; Luke 22:55-63; John 18:15-18, 25-27] Even Jesus in Gethsemane prayed, “If it be possible, let this cup pass from me.” [Matthew 26:36-46; Mark 14:32-42; Luke 22:39-46]

To follow my calling, I must set aside my ego, my physical and emotional comforts. I will journey way outside my comfort zone, as did Peter, Moses, Paul and Jesus....and let's not forget Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

In a paraphrase from Psalm 2, God says, "Yet to know Me, fears and illusions must be faced, as an iron rod hitting a clay pot shining Light into the darkness¹." Not a flowerpot; I envision a deep clay jar

¹ Nan C. Merrill, Psalms for Praying, an Invitation to Wholeness. (New York: The Continuum Publishing Group Inc, 2008). like those used to store water or wine. When you try to look inside, all you see is the darkness. When you say, "Hello!" it echoes. What a great image! [Re-read]

I believe calls come to those who are seeking to take on the challenge...knowingly or unknowingly, ready or not. We know the magi were searching. Those of us reading Moses, Man of the Mountain in adult ed. have read of Moses' desire to know God...his mission though was not what he expected. I like to think that Peter and Paul also, in their own ways were ready to let that iron rod of God, break their clay pot of self, and let in Divine Light.

When I joined Peace Corps to volunteer in Bolivia, I was searching for a calling. I was ready. I had no idea in what direction my life-journey would take me. After serving for two years, just six months before my Close of Service I had an accident and was medically evacuated back to Washington, DC for repairs. During my recovery in Washington, DC, while watching a public service announcement on television, (my light was the glow from a TV) I had an epiphany! The Washington/Metro area was encouraging Latino youth to stay in school, not to drop out. Before I had left Forest Grove for Peace Corps I had worked for fourteen years in agriculture. Many of my co-workers had been teenage migrant- workers who should have been in school. My work in Bolivia involved working with teenagers who did not have the opportunity to go to school beyond sixth grade. My calling was, and still is, to work in education with migrant and farm worker families, and any family that has been denied the opportunity to a fulfilling education.

Within three months of my return to Forest Grove, I was working with Hillsboro School District's Migrant Summer School and in Forest Grove School District with at-risk high school youth. I continue in that calling. I must admit though, daily, I have to smash this clay pot to let the Light into the darkness that is inside...just as Moses, and Simon Peter did...just as we are all called to do.

Almighty God whose Son our Savior Jesus Christ is the light of the world: Grant that we, illumined by your Word and Sacraments, may shine with the radiance of Christ's glory, that Christ may be known, worshipped and obeyed in this community and to the ends of the earth...Amen.