

Scripture for December 14, 2008

Reflection from John Surette, SJ

Anointed and Sacred

In our first reading today from the great Prophet Isaiah we heard this proclamation: “The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me”...has anointed me!

The purpose of anointing in Isaiah’s time was to make sacred the person being anointed.

What about us? Do we realize that we are anointed ones? Do we realize that we were anointed with oil and made sacred at our Baptisms and again at our Confirmations?

Prior to these sacramental anointings, do we realize that from our time in the womb we were anointed? From that time we were holy, we were sacred. I invite you to embrace this truth because to participate in the great Mystery of Existence is to be holy... is to be sacred... is to be anointed.

There is a card for sale here in the Ministry Center’s gift shop. It features some art work by Sr. Mary Southard and it also contains a quote from the famous



**Rabbi Abraham Heschel.
The quote reads: “Just to be is a blessing, just to live is holy.”**

**Just to be is to be anointed;
just to exist is to be holy and to be sacred. God looks upon all of creation, upon everything that exists and everyone who exists, and God says that it is very good...it is holy...it is sacred.**

The Well

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1515 W. Ogden Ave.
LaGrange Park, IL 60526
www.csjthewell.org
thewell@csjoseph.org

The anointings we received at our Baptisms and our Confirmations do not stand in isolation. They are a particularization, a focusing in time, of the anointing that permeates God's Sacred Universe from its beginning. It is that cosmic anointing that suffuses everything that exists and everyone who exists.

Our primordial anointings as members of God's Universe and our particular sacramental anointings are blessings but they also carry a duty and some responsibilities.

The Prophet Isaiah proclaims this duty and responsibility: "The Lord God has sent me to bring glad tidings to the poor, to heal the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and release to the prisoners..."

This duty to be concerned about the poor is indeed a heavy responsibility, especially for those of us who live in a comfort zone where we have much more than the minimum required to live with dignity. It is a heavy responsibility especially for those of us who to a greater or lesser extent are caught-up the consumerist culture to which we belong and within which we live our lives...a caught-up-ness that perhaps each of us feels most acutely during this sometimes hectic season of Christmas gift-giving.

To a large extent the poor, the marginalized, and the downpressed are victims of a system, a system of structural injustices that hardly affects you and me in any negative way. In fact, it is a system from which we actually benefit... as anointed ones our duties and our responsibilities to God's poor are clear.

It is not only the human poor who are downpressed but also the other-than-human poor: the air, water, and soils that are polluted, the biosystems that are under increasing stress and facing collapse, the ever-increasing number of life species that are on the slippery slope into extinction... as anointed ones our duties and our responsibilities are clear.

As anointed ones who embrace these duties and responsibilities, we need not fear or worry. On the contrary we can rejoice. As Isaiah says toward the end of his proclamation:

“I rejoice heartily in the Lord, in my God is the joy of my soul; for God has clothed me with a robe of salvation and wrapped me in a mantle of justice.”

As anointed one, you and I sisters and brothers, can rejoice because we have been clothed with a robe of salvation and wrapped in a mantle of justice.

Finally, lest we forget, the word “Christ” means “the anointed one.” And so we say “Jesus, the Christ”...with a capital “C”...Jesus, the anointed one. Each of us in the chapel this morning can also say her or his first name and follow that first name with the words “the christ” with a small “c”, for each one of us is an anointed one!

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