

The Gospel for January 20, 2008

Reflection from John Surette, SJ

Our second reading this morning from the First letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians begins with these words: “Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God...”

Each of us in this chapel has been called and it is no accident that we are living out our calling at the beginning of the third millennium and its twenty-first century.

We were first called at the beginning of time some 14 billion years ago. At that beginning a Divine dream was dreamed and a Divine word was spoken.

Our Universe flared forth into existence. At that moment you and I were present among the infinite number of possibilities contained in the Divine dream. It was a dream of a Universe filled with the mystery of existence... existence in abundance, existence overflowing.



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We were called a second time some 20, 30, 40, 50, 60, 70, 80, 90 years ago when each of us foamed into being within our mother’s womb. What had only been a possibility, a potentiality, for some 14 billion years, at that moment became an actuality, a flesh and blood

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member of God’s Universe, a flesh and blood revelation of the Divine love and purpose.

You and I were called a third time at our baptisms when the question was asked: “What name do you give this child?” or when the priest said: “I baptize you, (your name .”

At this third calling we, like Saint Paul, were designated as disciples of Jesus. We took our place in that long line of disciples who over the centuries – amidst successes and failures, joys and sorrows, good health and poor health, hopes and fears – were faithful to their callings.

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Of course, there have been many other callings that each one of us as individuals can name – the call to married life, to parenthood, to the single life, to the religious life, to all the career paths we have followed, and especially, for many of us, the call to grow old gracefully.

Jesus of Nazareth was called to a ministry of preaching and healing to his own Jewish people, in the towns and villages of his own country. Saint Paul lived in a different time. He wrote his first letter to the believers in Corinth, people who lived in a different place and a different culture. His preaching and writing, though grounded in the life and teachings of Jesus, was tailored, adapted, expanded, and shaped so as to speak to the Corinthians within their uniqueness.

Our discipleship, the words that we speak and the lives that we live, although grounded in the life and teachings of Jesus, needs to be shaped so as to address and touch the uniqueness of third millennium, twenty-first century people.

We live in a time of wars and injustices, a time of an increasing gap between the rich and the poor, a time of economic and cultural exploitation, a time of hurricanes, earthquakes, tsunamis...all problems that have confronted previous generations.

We also live at a time when we are faced with unique problems, problems that no previous generation ever had to confront: the threat of nuclear weapons, the planet-wide mass movement of refugee populations, the accumulation of enormous wealth in the hands of a few corporations, the planet-wide growth of fundamentalism, and without doubt, the greatest of all our challenges, the ever increasing diminishment of our planet and the destruction of its life.

Each one of us is called and it is no accident that we are called at this time and not some past time or some future time.

May we respond with the words of our responsorial psalm: “Here I am Lord; I come to do your will.”

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