

Blessed Trinity Catholic Community + Spirit of Christ Mission  
Twenty-fourth Sunday Autumn Ordinary time ~ September 16, 2018

Isaiah 50:4c-9a; Psalm 116:1-2,3-4,5-6,9-9; James 2:14-18; Mark 8:27-35

Homily ~ Fr. Ed Hislop

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**O**n the day of our baptism we were bathed in the love of God, clothed in the care of Christ and sent on our way with the wind and a song through life—life unknown and filled with mystery. Life for sure with good times and bad, sickness and health, grace and sin, gain and loss. For living we were sealed, marked—with the cross of Christ branded into our skin, body, heart and soul—the cross to be seen, felt, carried as we live, laugh, sin, do “good works,” cry, despair and hope.

The cross which makes and shapes us into the family of this Christ, promising that we belong and that this journey of living is never made alone but only together.

The bath of baptism made and makes *us* the Church, the Body of Christ, the spirit of hope, the promise of truth, compassion, justice and conversion again and again. The sign of the cross emblazed on our forehead can never be removed; we can never not belong, we can never really leave or abandon this “family of Christ.” We have been made the Church and nothing can separate us from the love of God: *nothing* or no one, because *we, every one of us*, have been made the Church forever!

It is God, in good times and in bad, who opens our ears and makes us hear. God is our help and so despite everything falling upon us these days, we who bear that cross are not disgraced, even when disgraceful things are done. We are chosen to “walk before the Lord in the land of the living,” bearing the holy cross through days and times of distress and sorrow as the snares of darkness seem to fall upon us. We live bearing the holy cross believing that God is kind but listens to truth; merciful but demands justice. We, the baptized church believe, trusting that in some way at some time God will free our eyes from tears and our feet from stumbling. So we choose to walk together with Christ in the land of the living, in the place of life, laughter, tears, among the many who bear the

cross of suffering, rejection, abuse and hunger of every sort, there to discover anew this Christ whose cross we bear.

And as we move we hear a voice in the midst of it all: “Who do you say that I am?” How does your faith transform the life of another? How does the cross branded into your body and soul transform this church, this world? What do we do together to live the cross we bear as we make our way through the “land of the living?” Who are we waiting for?

The words of Saint John Chrysostom from the fourth century echo the words of St. James today and can shape our response: ***“Would you honor the body of Christ? Do not despise his nakedness; do not honor him here in church ...and then pass him by unclothed and frozen outside. Remember that he who said, “This is my Body”; “This is my blood,” and made good his words, also said, “You saw me hungry and gave me no food,” thirsty and gave me no drink; a stranger and gave me no welcome; and, “in so far as you did not do it for one of these, you did not do it for me...”***

*Saint John Chrysostom, Fourth century*

This vision we can live, these works we can do, this hope we can affirm, but not alone. Even when the snares of the netherworld seize upon us and we fall into distress and sorrow, the unclothed and frozen are still at our doorstep, the hungry and thirsty look to us for food and drink; the sick long for healing, the homeless for refuge and the maltreated for justice. All of this even as we gaze inward and see the sickness, disgrace and shame in our church; even as we demand truth, justice and conversion.

Even then we still need to do the “works” of faith, we still need one another, we still need to belong, we still need to “appear together,” we who bear the seal of the cross, we who have been bathed in love and clothed in care. We still need to lose our life for the sake of Christ, seen in the many faces at

our doorstep, and in the broken hearts and spirits of so many seized upon in their innocence.

These works of faith we must do because in baptism we have been made the church forever, and by that right we appear together and will not go away.

***Bathe us in your love again,  
clothe us in your care,  
fold us in your arms,  
hold us close once more.  
Light our way back home.***



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