

16th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Homily presented at St Boniface Parish by Franklin Fong, OFM

First reading, Genesis 18:1-10a

Second Reading, Colossians 1:24-28

Gospel: Luke 10:38 -42

In this weekend's three readings we really have to take some extra time to sit back and reflect a bit later in this week about how the main theme of these readings is expressed in your lives as individuals and as members of the parish community of faith.

So what is the central theme of the three readings?

In the first reading from Genesis, we have Abraham modeling for us what it means to have a relationship with total strangers who he believes are angels or representatives of God. Abraham enthusiastically invites them to rest, get some food and drink, and to relax from their long trip. He recruits his wife Sarah to help prepare the meal for these guests who just show up at their tent.

In the second reading, from St Paul's letter to the Colossians about how he is bringing the hope and wisdom of the Good News. And to do that he must take up as he refers to it as the "sufferings for your sake". So we now see Paul as the stranger in the land of Gentiles, preaching and willfully taking on the burdens of doing this ministry of building the church or the "body of Christ".

In the Gospel reading from Luke, we hear about Jesus's visit with Martha and Mary. We hear about the two different ways that these two disciples of Jesus, have a

relationship with him. For Mary this relationship is about listening and discussing with Jesus aspects of the Good News. For Martha the relationship with Jesus is about her preparing the food drink for him and preparing dinner table so that everything will be ready in good time.

So what do we see in each of these readings that is in common? IT is about relationship between the one with Good News and the ones who need to hear the good news. We have presented to us three perspectives of what this relationship is all about for the life of any disciple.

In the first reading it is about how we show hospitality to the strangers in our lives. It is about generosity, attentiveness, and interactions with the strangers. And it focuses more on the perspective of the host.

In the second reading, it is about the perspective of how we are the stranger in the community need to be open to accepting the challenges and demands of being the stranger in a foreign land and culture.

Finally in the Gospel reading from Luke, we hear of the perspective of being that person who is the guest and not a stranger to the hosts.

So we see that yes the central theme is about hospitality but it is from each of three different perspectives:

- the perspective of the host;

- the perspective of the guest who is a stranger; and finally
- the perspective of the guest who is a respected friend of the host.

In each of these situations we begin to appreciate a slightly different lesson from each of these three perspectives.

Firstly, Abraham models for us what it means to be the host - to be generous, enthusiastic, inviting, persistent.

Secondly, St Paul reminds us that as a stranger in a foreign culture, we must expect to take on challenges, and burdens as part of our presence in this foreign culture.

Finally, Jesus reminds us that there are two distinctive ways of being that good disciple:

- to learn as best you can about what the good news is about; and
- to do something in your world as an expression of your receiving this good news in your life.

The main point of Jesus tho is that we need to do both,

i.e. to learn and to do some pastoral ministry. One without the other will not work in the long run. And that we have to always start with the learning piece first, followed by ministry and action steps.

So let us reflect in the coming days of how we as individuals, as families and as a parish have practiced each of the lessons presented in these three readings.

So how have you shown hospitality to the strangers in your midst?

How have you carried the cross or the burdens of being that stranger in a foreign situation?

And how have you been able to balance between the contemplative spiritual life and the active pastoral ministry life as a disciple of Jesus?

Certainly we as a parish have shown our generosity in opening our church to the homeless during the week days.

Clearly we have carried the cross of having to start a St Anthony Foundation and a Gubbio Project to take care of the pastoral needs of sustaining these projects.

And we as a parish have provided programs of retreats, days of recollections, programs to help us all learn more about the teachings of Jesus and the Church in today's world.

As well we have provided opportunities for volunteer activities for many different types of volunteer ministries in the parish - being that catechist, or clean up crew, or Eucharistic minister, or lector .

Reflect on how you can use these ideas to build on your family as a church. What ways have you prayed together? Or done ministries together?

And so, we have a powerful set of readings that deals with the nuts and bolts of what it takes to keep the

faith alive, growing and maturing in ourselves and in our families.

Pay attention to the many ways you have already deepened your faith over the years to reach the level of prayer and ministry at this point of your life. The spiritual life is cumulative and the Holy Spirit slowly works in each of our lives one day at a time to fulfill God's vision for each of us.

At most times, we only have a hint of what it is that God is preparing us for in our lives. And it is only upon reflection on your faith journey are you able to recognize who you are becoming as a Christian. Just think about what you were doing 15 or 25 years ago? How did you get from there to here at St Boniface Parish?

My own journey of faith as a Friar began with St Boniface over 25 years ago. And I never thought I would ever be assigned here ! Here I am Lord, 5 weeks now here at St Boniface ! Alleluia
Alleluia!

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