

## Reflection for Sunday, January 23, 2022

### Mandate

*We sing of Jesus, a Jew, born to a woman in poverty in a time of social upheaval and political oppression. He knew human joy and sorrow. So filled with the Holy Spirit was he that in him people experienced the presence of God among them. We sing praise to God incarnate. ( Song of Faith)*

*“We (Christians) believe that with all its pain and suffering, this is God’s world, because of Jesus Christ, who, as John’s Gospel tells us, is like a light shining in the darkness, and the darkness does not overcome it. His life, his teaching, his death, his resurrection, above all, his unconquerable love, are so overwhelmingly impressive that we confess that in Jesus we have seen the glory of the Father, full of grace and truth. In Jesus, something new entered the world, a life so compelling in its love and outreach to all that we accept him as the revelation of the deepest reality. It is in him that we learn what human life is about and what this world is about” (John Macquarrie).*

May the peace of the Lord be always with you.

Let us pray:

*God, all creation sings of your glory. Your power and might are on display for all to see. Thank you for the marvelous world you spoke into being. This world points to your beauty and magnifies your greatness. Thank you as well for the precepts of scripture, which call attention to your perfect and just ways and reveal your intention for all of us as human beings. Help us to see you in both creation and scripture and to celebrate how you have made yourself known. In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.*

A core conviction of the Christian faith is that human beings don't know anything about God on our own. It's not as if we can go into a laboratory and discover something about God, nor can we think more and, suddenly, our thoughts will lead us to God. Rather, our knowledge comes through a single word: *revelation*. God's most definitive revelation happened in Jesus, whom, as John says in the opening of his Gospel, "has made God known" (John 1:18). Elsewhere Paul reminds us that in Jesus "all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell" (Col. 1:19).

Following on the heels of his baptism and his experience in the wilderness for forty days, with its attending understanding of his vocation, Jesus stands in his hometown synagogue and gives his induction address by quoting from Isaiah. He concludes his oration with the stirring words: "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

At any new beginning—a marriage, a birth, a new job—there is a moment of truth. It is a moment that overshadows and flavours and gives meaning to all the other moments. A moment when declarations are made, commitments sealed, mission statements shaped, and induction statements publicly proclaimed. When Jesus concluded his reading of Isaiah, he sat down and gave a one-sentence homily: "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." In one powerful sentence he summed up his life's purpose.

What you and I have before us is a moment of truth: we can decide to leave this statement alone, or we can choose to imitate it in living out our Christian faith. As Robert S. Danna opines, "If only we would let his voice light our way, instead of attending with great energy and devotion to the many other voices and promptings we receive."

In the winter of 1947, the abbot Pierre, who was known as the modern Apostle of Mercy to the poor of Paris, found a young family on the

streets one night. They were homeless and destitute, nearly frozen to death. He gathered them up and brought them to the monastery, which was already full of other poor and outcast persons. As he looked for a place for their makeshift beds, there wasn't room in the regular rooms, so the abbot took them to the chapel. He promptly removed the reserved sacraments from the altar area and placed them in an unheated attic. He placed the family's bedding on and around the altar. The other monks expressed shock at such irreverence. The abbot replied, "Jesus Christ is not cold in bread and wine, but he is absolutely cold in the body of a little child." That priest knew that his mission was not to be a protector of the church building and its rituals, but to open the church doors to those whom Christ made it his mission to serve.

Know your mission, and it will light the path you are intended to take. May it be so. Thanks be to God. Amen.

*Bill Cantelon*