

We must live St. Paul's good news every day

Thomas Gumbleton | Jan. 11, 2013

At the end of the passage from St. Paul's letter to the Colossians that we heard this morning, Paul says, "This is the good news." He's excited. Remember, he's in prison, but he's still rejoicing, and he's just thrilled because he can proclaim the good news. What was that good news? It was what Paul had been writing to them about this mystery that was not made known to past generations, but only now, through revelations, given to holy apostles and prophets.

<p>Here is the revelation. Now the non-Jewish people, the ones we called the Gentiles, the non-Jewish people share the inheritance in Christ Jesus. The non-Jews are incorporated into the promise. This, he says, is the good news, and it's the good news that we have failed to fully accept, I think. What Paul is saying is that Jesus came not for the chosen people, not for a few who become his disciples, but Jesus came for all.</p>	<p>God entered into human history at this moment in time. God became one of us in Jesus, and as we say in the eucharistic prayer where we say, "This is the cup of my blood, the blood of the new and everlasting covenant. It will be shed for you and for all so that sins may be forgiven." God came into our human history, he became one of us so that all people could share in the fullness of God's life. Jesus himself had declared that toward the end of his life, when he was reflecting on what was to happen to him.</p>	<p>all the nations -- Paul says Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord Isaiah 60:1-6 Psalms 72:1-2, 7-8, 10-11, 12-13 Ephesians 3:2-3, 5-6 Matthew 21:1-12 Full text of the readings [1]</p>
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He was even terrified of his suffering and death. He cried out, "This is why I have come. I have come so that all people may be raised up when I am lifted up." By that, he meant on the cross, pouring forth his life, his love for all people. When I am lifted up, all people will come to me. All people share in the fullness of God's life. That gift is offered to everyone, not for a few, but for all. This beautiful truth is reflected in our other readings today and in the Gospel lesson.

This is a story that is only in Matthew's Gospel. Matthew included it because this is a community of Jews for whom he was writing his Gospel, and they more than other Christians, those who were already from the Gentiles of the nations, the Greeks and others, the Jewish people hesitated -- the Jewish Christians -- to accept that Jesus had come for all and not just for those who were circumcised and those who followed the law. Matthew tells this beautiful story of those people from the East: astrologers, people who studied the stars, something condemned in the Jewish scriptures, to try to accept your life according to astrology or the stars.

That was condemned, and yet, here are these people coming, astrologers, as Matthew calls them, who say they understand that there is this new king born. They come, and before they leave, they worship him, the Son of God. They recognize Jesus according to the story in Matthew. They are blessed, and they go back and become people who are saved, who share in the fullness of the gifts of love and life that Jesus brings. That's the message of the story from the Gospel today, but that story from the Gospel has also been foretold in a sense by Isaiah hundreds of years before.

In our first lesson, where Isaiah is saying to the people still in exile who refuse to come back, "Arise, shine, for your light has come. The glory of God rises upon you. Even though night's robe covers the earth and gloomy

clouds veil the peoples, Yahweh now rises over you. God's glory appears." Isaiah proclaims, "All nations will come to your light to the brightness of your dawn." Isaiah is saying, "You must come back, rebuild Jerusalem and rebuild the temple so you can be a light to all the nations. Draw them, because they see the love of God manifest in you."

In fact, the words that Isaiah uses even remind us of today's Gospel. Matthew probably drew from this passage. "A flood of camels will cover you. Caravans from Midian and Ephah, those from Sheba will come and bring with them gold and incense." Matthew makes his story out of this. It's a reinforcing of what Paul has declared. It's reinforced by Matthew. It's reinforced in Isaiah.

In fact, in chapter 60 of Isaiah, which is our lesson today, is only in a way repeating what was already in chapter two of Isaiah, where in the last days the mountain of Yahweh's house -- Mount Zion with the temple -- shall be set over the highest mountains. "She'll tower over the hills. All nations will stream to it." Here is the beautiful result. They will go to the house of the God of Jacob, that God may teach them God's ways and that they may go in God's path.

God will rule over the nations and settle disputes with many peoples. Here is what will happen as a result of all nations sharing in this gift of God's love: They will beat their swords into plowshares, their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not raise sword against nation. They will never train for war again. This is what can happen and what God promises when God comes into our midst and Jesus, the Son of God, becomes part of our human history.

All people can come together and share in the gifts that God gives for all, and not for a few. It's a beautiful vision. It's a promise, in fact, from God, that this could happen. War would never be again. Turn your swords into plowshares, your spears into pruning hooks for peaceful purposes. Why hasn't it happened? Jesus came 2,000 years ago, and this message has been proclaimed for well over 2,000 years because it goes back to Isaiah and the other prophets.

God came into human history to bring all people together, but it hasn't happened because we have failed, all of us, down through the ages, those who claim to follow Jesus and those Jewish people who were his chosen people to be what Isaiah says they are called to be -- a light to the nations, our light, so that all people will see what happens when you follow the way of God's love. This was taught so clearly in the Vatican council 50 years ago.

The first document describes how the church is the community of God's disciples, all of us gathered together, brothers and sisters in Jesus, to be a light to the nations. We will only be that light to the nations when we begin to live according to the way of Jesus. I, when I am lifted up, will draw all people to myself. When he's lifted up, he's pouring fourth love on everyone: enemies, friends, no exceptions. Jesus' love is for all, and he shows us the only way to fullness of life, to peace in our world, to make the promises of God to come forth is when we begin to live according to the teachings of Jesus.

Those are the teachings that he proclaimed throughout his life, but especially at the Last Supper when he told his disciples, "There is one commandment that I leave with you." Love one another. That's all. But it's a love that's unlimited, and it's a love that is unconditional. There is no greater love than this: to lay down your life for another, and not just for your friends but for your enemies. This message of Jesus we haven't learned; or, at least, we haven't carried it out.

In our individual lives, in our family life, in our homes and in our communities here, the parish family and our civil communities, we are called to be a light to the nations. When all of us in our individual lives, in our communities lives and in our life as a nation, when we begin to really follow this way of Jesus, then the fullness of God promised will happen and there will be reconciliation and peace among all the nations of the earth.

As we celebrate this great feast of the manifestation of Jesus recorded in Matthew's Gospel, but also pre-spoken of in Isaiah and the other prophets, as we celebrate this manifestation of Jesus, we must recommit ourselves to follow the way of Jesus in every part of our lives, and then the promise of God for reconciliation and peace among all nations and within our own individual lives will happen. It's with great joy that Paul proclaims the good news. I hope we listen to that good news with joy and commit ourselves to live this good news as fully as we can every day of our lives.

[Homily given at St. Hilary Parish, Redford, Mich. The transcripts of Bishop Gumbleton's homilies are posted weekly to NCRonline.org. [Sign up here](#) [2] to receive an email alert when the latest homily is posted.]

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