

St. Thomas's Episcopal Parish in Newark  
Newark, DE  
The Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany – February 12, 2017/Year A  
Deuteronomy 30:15-20; Psalm 119:1-8; 1 Corinthians 3:1-9; Matthew 5:21-37  
The Reverend Paul W. Gennett, Jr.

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*May my words reveal the greater glory of God. AMEN*

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In my youthful days, so LONG, LONG AGO, I was active in many sports. Unlike our current day youth sports programs which seems so well and so overly organized, a bunch of kids would gather together on a dusty baseball field, ripe with summer heat ... or a grassy field that became our favorite football stadium ... or on the hard asphalt of a basketball court throughout the year. Someone would claim or be claimed as Captain, and then the fateful **choosing of sides** would begin. Fateful because you really did not want to be the LAST one chosen; however, it was better than not being chosen at all!

As I reflected back of these days in my life, a truth emerged I had not thought of in a long time. The teams that most often won the World Series/Super Bowl/NBA Championship trophy rarely had one player as their superstar who carried the team to glory all by themselves. The winning teams were usually just that – A TEAM made up of all types, sizes, sorts, and talents, melded together to bring out the best in each other in their performance. **It was rarely the ONE ... it was most often the ALL.**

As the lyrics of that oldies song proclaims, **“It takes two, baby.”** In our day and times, it rarely is the ONE ... it is often the ALL.

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As we continue our journey with the Corinthian community and its early formation of the faith, Paul continues to set the theological framework of faith **to be lived**. While the Corinthian gathering wishes to hook their faith on THE ONE, Paul emphasizes the truth of a living faith is lived through THE ALL ...

*“Even now you are still not ready... For as long as there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not of the flesh, and behaving according to human inclinations? For when one says, “I belong to Paul,” and another, “I belong to Apollos,” are you not merely human? What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you came to believe, as the Lord assigned to each. I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth.”*

Apollos was a convert to the Christian life through Paul's preaching and debating in Greece. As you might suspect by his name, he was Greek and believe to be a smooth, silver-tongued preacher formed in the Greek tradition of debate. I am guessing he might have been "easy on the eyes" as well next to Paul's short, stocky, ruddy stature and at time fiery temperament. One might understand the leaning toward Apollos than the "runt."

Yet the truth of the life of faith, the life of **praying with your legs**, is that , **"It takes two, baby"** and many, many more. It takes the body of faith, the Church, with its wonderful mixture of liberal and conservative, evangelical and liturgical, right wing and left wing, to move forward in flight TOGETHER by sharing and being the Good News of Christ to our world, then and now. For the PEOPLE of faith, together just as we are, this means that God is more **a verb than a noun**, more a **journey than a destination**, more an **experienced faith than doctrinal consideration**, and most particularly more a **relationship with God and Christ than a nice idea to call on when needed**.

After one of the services last Sunday, a person shared their understanding yet sadness at the announcement of my resignation and leaving this parish family later this year. They continued by saying how much I had been a part of bringing them into St. Thomas's and living their faith BUT **"... we may not come any longer when you are not here."** While grateful for the "watering and planting" I may have had part of in their lives, my response to them was twofold ...

- First, talk with Marge Cann! She will set things straight on what the family of living faith means to her, and it has little to do with who is the priest at the time! Priests come, priest go ... THIS community is THE CHURCH for Marge..
- Second, what we have shared over these eight years in faith and life is now your call to **share and pay forward this faith to others!** Whatever I have shared, transformed, renewed in your life through serving you in this time and place, NOW is the time for you **to water, to plant, to BE the church of St. Thomas's**, and as through our time together, trusting that God will indeed give the growth!

Some people are always looking for something more – something more electric and kinetic to happen to them religiously. Those things do happen, sometimes, to some people. Yet the truth of the matter is that religion is NOT about seeking after the extraordinary or a quest for the next new spiritual high. It is not about looking for an experiential fix of the Holy to carry one through another drab and ordinary week.

A LIVING faith is about **seeing, feeling, hearing, and respecting the Holy in the ordinary of our daily lives**. To be faithful is not a matter of being otherworldly but to be uniquely grounded in this world, seeing the very stuff of life as the very stuff of God. Where are we to find the Holy? You do not have to go to the mountaintop for it is all around you, all the time.

How do we know this? It is shown to us in the sacraments we share, week in and week out. The water poured into the font, the water in which we baptize, is ordinary water. It is the same water that comes out of the drinking fountain, the same water that flushes down the toilet – **it is just water!** What makes it holy is how we use it. We use it to baptize a child and speak the promise of Christ that we claim lives through us. Through this water we bring this child into covenant with God and into community with us. It is God promising and acting through our believing and celebrating which reveals the Holy within the ordinary.

Notice this day how our Eucharistic prayer concludes with this phrase – **“By Christ, with Christ, and THROUGH Christ.”** We do not pray TO Christ ... we pray THROUGH Christ who, when we are living our faith by praying with our feet, **Christ prays through us!**

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One of my Tuesday morning bible study companions shared wisdom from the Native American tradition. Finding the Great Spirit present in all of creation, they hold a great reverence for the earth and all its creatures, most particularly birds, eagles and ravens being a particular source of spiritual strength and wisdom. What the person reminded me and our small band of early morning friends in the Word of God is this – while these magnificent creatures float majestically on the wind currents, they cannot fly unless **the right wing and the left wing work together.** Otherwise, they will simply fall in ever descending circles until it crashes to earth.

**“It takes two, baby.”** In our day and times, it rarely is the ONE ... it is often the ALL together, praying with our legs, and BEING the Good News THROUGH God and Christ!

*AMEN*