

Breaking Open the Word: Which Way Should We Go

January 22, 2023: 3rd Sunday in Ordinary Time

WE READ, LISTEN and BREAK OPEN THE WORD:

Today's Readings: **Isaiah 8:23 – 9:3**, **1 Corinthians 1:10-13, 17** and the Gospel: **Matthew 2:1-12**. While someone reads the Scripture(s), listen well. BE AWARE OF THE IMAGE BEING PAINTED, OR THE STORY BEING TOLD. DOES THE STORY OR THE IMAGE CALL TO MIND ANYTHING SIMILAR IN YOUR OWN LIFE EXPERIENCE? Share your impressions.

✓ *What happens when things fall apart for you? What is your way of responding/reacting?*

✓ *What did you feel? Was the emotion more from the surprise or the gift/award/compliment?*

Often when the matriarch/patriarch of a family dies, families do not just go into mourning, but struggle to regain a sense of balance to discover a common focal point person.

✓ *Any inheritance struggles in your family history? How disabling were they?*

When a “boss” retires or the key person in a constellation moves on, there is a period of readjustment for the social unit to regain its equilibrium.

✓ *When have you experienced such a life situation? How did recovery heal the wound of loss or how did dis-integration take over the productive, life-giving balance of life?*

✓ *Who was the one with the messiah complex? (“Who died and left you in charge?”)*

✓ *Who was the one who was able to facilitate healing? (“We’re so glad you were here?”)*

✓ *In both of those: Was it the one you thought it would be?*

✓ *Where did the person or working group gain the empowerment to foster new growth and refurbish the project? ...familial balance? ...etc.?*

<+><+><+><+><+><+><+><+><+><+><+><+>

Paul, called after the Resurrection; after the Ascension; after the death (martyrdom) of Steven, bore responsibility as an Apostle: “Apostles were commissioned as MESSENGERS—they were sent out to share the good news of Jesus with people who had never heard it before, often traveling all over the world, PREACHING AND CONVERTING PEOPLE TO THE FAITH, and PLANTING NEW CHURCHES as they went (Acts 1:8)”

In addition to extending the face of the Early Community, Paul also kept his ear to the ground and wrote letters animating, chastising, affirming and challenging the communities to re-member/re-call what he taught them while with them. His hope, so often expressed in his letters was one of maintain the Unity of the Body of Christ. Today he states: **THAT YOU BE UNITED IN THE SAME MIND AND IN THE SAME PURPOSE!** This is so apropos to many of us! **Is Christ Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?** Paul took the Word to everyone! He wrote to those who said ‘Yes!’

✓ *What would Paul’s message be today?*

✓ *Which part(s) of the Church would Paul see to need an honest come-up-pence?*

Paul is clarifying as to his perceived calling and purpose: To Preach the Gospel! For **Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel.** That pen didn’t dry up 2,000 years ago. Paul calls:

✓ *What is your part (currently)? (Witness, call [invitation], outreach, catechesis, [im]migrants, community engagement, organizing)? Which/Culture/Region would Paul be challenging today?*

✓ *What would Paul’s ask/challenge be today about Unity in the Church?*

A principle of Vatican II was Christian Unity. Even Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI worked for different levels of Christian Unity. *What is your take on Christian Unity? How do you move toward knowing and engaging folks of different denominations?*

Is that too far afield? How about Post COVID re-engagement. Community without participation loses a sense of identity. *What is your engagement pulse? What is your offering to Christian community happening again? Is your seat at the church’s table at home or in the assembly?*