

The Fourth Sunday of Ordinary Time

By: Fr. Greg Ames

The other day I came home to pick something up and let the dog out. She took her time chasing deer and turkey vultures out of the yard, so I sat down and flipped on the TV while I waited for her to be done. I came across a show called, A Baby Story. Each episode follows a couple in the final weeks before their baby is born. The episode was almost over, the couple sitting on the couch with dad holding his new baby. The father said to the camera, *I never believed that I could love someone so much for no reason. Looking at his wife he said, I know why I love her, for reasons I can talk about and for things that are inside me but I can't express. But I am amazed out how much I just love him, (his son), who doesn't do anything but let me love him.*

Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you. . .

What happens after that moment? When does the time come that we become so needy, our expectations get so great, our lives so busy, that love loses that purity? What is it that closes our heart so that we cease being amazed and surprised at our capacity to love or be loved. As followers of Christ, we know our lives are supposed to be about love; and a love that extends not only to the people I share my life with, but to others, who need to be amazed and surprised at God's love seen in us. The reading from Corinthians, poetic and beautiful about love, is the number one favorite at weddings. And yet, Paul would shake his head and say, it isn't about marriage. It is about life, the life that we lead. He tells us it is easy to forget what is important; the things that last: FAITH, HOPE and LOVE.

FAITH

Jeremiah, the great Old Testament prophet, did not have a lot of confidence. He believed that he was going to be a failure as a prophet, and even questioned God's judgment in choosing him. Yet God does not give up on him, and tells him that even before he was in the womb God knew Jeremiah and loved him. And that is faith: to believe that God cares for you, not because of what you do, but simply and only because you are uniquely you. No one else can be you. How many of us grew with ideas

that we had to earn God's love by doing certain things or saying certain prayers, and if we didn't do it, God withdrew the love? That is not faith; that is just pettiness. True faith is empowering: God cares for me; I must live my life believing that.

HOPE

Last week Jesus gave his sermon in the synagogue this week, the verdict is in: the people didn't like it. He challenges them: a life of faith is more than just showing up in the synagogue. It is living what you believe, and they did not want to hear that, so they throw him out. We are told Jesus walks through them away. But this is the thing: Jesus did not keep walking, he did not run away. He was the most hopeful person that every lived; he never gave up on people. So he would come back and preach again, and talk again, with the hope that maybe on the 145th time, so one might say, I will follow you.

LOVE

This past week I went to see the movie Big Fish. Two women who had talked to me in the lobby, sat several rows behind us. They talked through the entire movie. Even the icy stares of people around them, and the shushing that periodically could be heard did not stop them. On the way out, they smiled at my friend and asked how he liked the movie. It was completely lost on them when he said, "I had a hard time hearing it." Paul tells the Corinthians, love is never rude. I am certain he was not referring to talking in a movie theater, but he knew that love, true love, was willing to be quiet, to listen, to pay attention. When I hear this reading at weddings, I look out at the congregation and wonder, what exactly are they hearing? When it was read today, what did you hear? For if it is just poetry, or if you were thinking about something else, then love doesn't stand a chance in your life, or the life of the world. If you listened and really heard with your heart, then you might just leave this place a little more energized by Christ's love for you, and a little more challenged by the question, what limits do I place on love?

READINGS OF THE WEEK

Jeremiah 1:4-19

1 Corinthians 12:21-13:13

Luke 4:21-30

February 3, 2013

靈 修 生 活

教 學 生 涯 原 是 夢

心 雲

「當我還是孩子的時候，說話像孩子，看事像孩子，思想像孩子；當我長大了，就把孩子的事都丟棄了。」(格前十三 11)

小時候的我，很喜歡做夢。在夢裡尋幽探勝，是好夢罷，是惡夢也罷，畢竟也只是南柯一夢。一覺醒來，又是新的一天。然而，也許是我這愛做夢的性格，以致現實生活的我常常碰壁。

我曾希冀有一個疼錫我、會為我排除萬難的哥哥，只可惜在我的童年回憶之中，我的哥哥除了讓我嘗到苦澀、仇恨的滋味外，便甚麼也沒有。

我曾夢想自己可以成為一個出色的記者，揭露社會的陰暗面，可笑的是現實世界中的傳媒圈，揭人瘡疤的新聞往往更被人重視。

我也夢想自己會成為一個耕草培苗的教師，我不敢說自己能作育英才，但我矢志要成為學生的同行者，與他們共同面對成長的困惑、喜悅與挑戰。可惜當我真正執起教鞭的時候，沉重的教擔、頑劣的學生、無日無之的行政工作、時刻要進修的勞累，以及朝不保夕的前景問題，都讓我覺得疲憊不堪。有時候面對學生的挑釁、無禮、更讓我懷疑小時候夢想的世界是否存在。

特別當愛、鼓勵、容忍與支持換來的只是再三的欺騙與不被尊重的時候，為了不被傷害，在某些學生面前，我惟有把自己武裝起來，不苟言笑。我認為這就是我的銅牆、鐵壁，可以保守我免受打擊。然而當我愈是板起臉孔，我就愈是迷惑：究竟昔日立志要成為學生同行者的我往哪裡去了？

上星期學校進行考試，因為不用上課，清閒了下來，有更多的時間可以與學生一起溫習、聊天、午膳。過程中讓我十分享受，因為離開教室的他們，是這樣的親切，就好像對他們有一番全新的體會。

不過，最令我感動的是，有一天我要到其中一班被我列為最難纏的班別監考，當天應考的也是我教受的科目。原先我以為他們不到十五分鐘便會對試卷「投降」，但讓我吃驚的是他們竟然全都很認真地作答，且大部份同學都堅守到最後一刻。當我批改試卷的時候，有同學在試卷的最後一版跟我說「對不起」。她說她已經盡力，雖然她知道成績一定很差，一定會令我失望。那刻的我有說不出的感動。她的寥寥數句，就像撥開了重重迷霧，讓我重拾對教學的信心與憧憬。

今日的讀經一，上主說要耶肋米亞先知成為堡壘、銅牆、鐵壁，使他即使被攻擊也罷，也不會被戰勝，因為上主的手時刻在左右。我相信上主也透過聖經向我勉勵。原來最好的保護，不是行為或言語上的武裝，而是保持著對上主那份如孩童般赤誠的心，繼續以愛對學生作出接納、寬恕、包容、忍耐。

我想我仍然喜愛做夢，縱然在現今的教學生涯與我夢中的世界仍有出入，但我知道只有憑著愛，我才有機會使我的教學夢夢境成真。

摘自「公教報」

本 週 讀 經

二零一三年二月三日

耶 1:4-19 ; 格前 12:31-13:13 ; 路 4:21-30