

Homily 4C – Deacon Steve Moses

What a difference a week can make!

The last two weeks we have heard two very different stories of Jesus and his relationship to the people. Last week he was loved by the crowds, they couldn't get enough of him.

This week, people want to kill him. What happened?

Did Jesus change? Did his message change? Did the people change?

I believe Jesus is consistent in his message of love and truth.

Simeon saw what was coming when he said: *“This child is destined for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be contradicted.”*

And John the Baptist, in the desert proclaimed: *“All flesh shall see the salvation of God”*.

You and I have *heard* Jesus himself proclaim, *“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me...”*, *“Today this Scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing.”*

You and I have heard the stories. We have heard the prophecies, listened to first hand accounts of the miracles of *Jesus*, his *betrayal* and *trial*, we know of his death for all of us by *crucifixion*, and his *rising in glory to God the Father*.

We know Jesus is the way and the truth and the life.

So I ask you, when you walk out these doors today, what are you going to do about what you know to be the truth, and the way, and the life, right here in Faribault, Minnesota?

Are you going to accept what Jesus has taught you? If you have...

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Are you going to practice what Jesus has told us, and take a stand for what you believe?

"You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment.

The second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

The whole law and the prophets depend on these two commandments."

To live up to what our Lord asks is not easy. But to die innocently, on a cross, is even harder.

How do we accept the Lords charge to each of us, and put our faith into practice, into action, in a real way?

After my parents moved from Duluth to Saint Paul I attended public schools. I still remember the year I was in third grade and experienced a lesson that was to stick with me to this day.

My third grade teacher had asked all of us to draw a picture of what Christmas meant to us. We could draw anything and color it in. All the pictures were going to be hung in the main hall of the school for everyone to see.

I recall there were beautiful pictures of Christmas trees, intricate snowflakes were popular, and some had drawn large ornaments. Of course Santa Clause with overly large presents was a favorite subject.

The day came when all the pictures were hung in the hall. All of us were proud of our drawings. Everyone entering the school walked past them.

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The day after the drawings were hung up, one of them had been crossed with crayon in an attempt to blot out the picture.

The drawing was the only one of its kind. It had been carefully drawn with *sand dunes*, *palm trees*, and *a small town* in the distance with a *bright star shining* in the *deep blue night sky*.

The teacher pulled the student who had drawn the picture out of the classroom to tell him what had happened, to say how sorry she was. She told the student that his picture was the only one with the true meaning of Christmas and someone had not wanted to see it. She had taken the picture off the wall so no one else would see what had been done.

But the student asked her to leave it up. So she put it back and soon it became a major topic of conversation. The truth of what Christmas was all about was not to be denied.

I was the student who had drawn *the little town of Bethlehem*. Even at my young age I instinctively knew that the truth was important to share.

Taking a stand is not easy, but it is the right thing to do.

There are always people who will criticize and find fault with those who do what they feel is right, moral and just.

The truth is that Christianity, *practiced with faith* and out of a *sense of love*, is *counter-cultural*.

Society does not like to be challenged!

Recently in the news, I read an article about another student who took a stand, and made a choice for what he believed in. This student was much older, and his decision was even more public.

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In the Pioneer Press this past Wednesday there was an article about **Lydon Murtha**. He was being recruited by the University of Minnesota's football program. During the recruitment process, it appears that some of the students took him to a strip club. That didn't sit too well with Lydon, and he decided to go elsewhere.

I'm sure that was a hard decision for him to make.

One of the *greatest gifts* God has given each of us is the gift of our very life, and the freedom to make our own choices.

In Jeremiah we hear something very profound, something that speaks to the truth of who we are as a remnant people, and how much our God loves each of us,

“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you...”

Put your name in there...

“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you...”

God calls us through the ages to a new way of living.

As God was with Jeremiah, so we can depend upon God to be with us in our need.

But as Paul tells us so eloquently in our second reading, *however we react, however we take a stand* for the Gospel, our *response must be born out of love*.

There is no getting around it: Christian love always and everywhere involves sacrifice.

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We know Jesus is the way and the truth and the life.

Let's *pray in this Eucharist* for the grace to be foolish in the eyes of the world and heroic in the courage it takes to love others sacrificially, and be loved by them, even to the point of death.

Amen.