

Commentary on the Gospel for Tue, Dec 29th 2015

The injunction to “Walk the Walk” and not just “Talk the Talk” seems to be at play in the reading for today’s Liturgy. These phrases challenge us on multiple levels of our life, but especially in regards to our faith in Jesus whose birth we continue to contemplate during the Octave of Christmas.

The Letter of John talks not about a “new” commandment, but a well-known commandment or call to deepen awareness of how the blessing of Christmas, the Light of Jesus, shines on us. We are challenged to walk the walk of that Light sent by God; how does it affect our lives? How are we to respond as persons gifted by that light? John makes it easy to understand: if we love our brother/sister we ARE in the light; if we hate our sister/brother we walk in darkness.

If I only talk the talk I might say: sure, I love my brothers; it’s what we do as Christians. We need only to tune into the daily news to show how difficult that brotherly love is. We’re bombarded with the hatred that shows up in the daily news of violence, death and destruction and the ongoing wars that confront us.

If I walk the walk, I confront such darkness in my actions. John’s Letter encourages me to start at home and love the ones there. Sure it’s small beginnings, but with God’s blessing and inspiration, it is a powerful move in the right direction. I am called into that love by God’s own love and the light that is incarnate in the person of Jesus the Christ, my brother who first loves me mightily.

Our Gospel reading today is the mystery of the presentation where Jesus’ parents introduce him to the larger religious community of “the law of Moses.” At the scene is the righteous and devout Simeon who for years faithfully and patiently longed for this very moment. He is there to hold in his arms Jesus the Christ, the awaited one of Israel, and to reveal what he knew about this savior.

What an intimate way to enter the beleaguered world in Jesus’ time. This is a world that cried out for being set straight and put on a path that leads people TOWARDS God and not away from God. Here is a baby who is destined for extraordinary things – a sign of contradiction for the fall and rise of Israel. What joy must have filled the heart of Simeon.

And, by the way, Mary, your heart will be pierced by a sword. And, by the way, those of us who want to walk the walk (with Jesus towards the Father) and not just talk about it; we’ll share in that sword along with Mary and the faithful called by Jesus into God’s own wonderful light.

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