

Commentary on the Gospel for Wed, Jan 9th 2013

Wednesday after Epiphany

In the first and third Scripture passages we heard in Mass today, there is an interesting connection between “Love” and “Fear”. In the Epistle, John tells us that love dispels fear. In the Gospel we learn that the lack of love will only intensify our fear.

Fear and Love are two of the most intense emotions in many peoples’ lives. Fear we won’t meet expectations, fear that we’re not lovable, fear that we won’t pass exams and fear of sickness and death. You name it. There are thousands of fears that disturb people including you and me.

Of course the psychologists tell us that there are two ways of coping. Flight (quit, copout, run for cover,) or Fight (attack the cause of your fear head on, conquer it, eliminate it by proving you are superior to it.)

In John’s letter he gives us a third and better way of coping. He says: “Love casts out fear.” He begins with the love of God. Not the romantic form of love. Rather he means the total giving of oneself to the other, surrendering oneself to the other, making the other’s well-being the greatest goal of our life. After all, the greatest cause of fear is our self-concern. I’m afraid I might fail, I might get hurt and maybe I’ll be humiliated. On and on it goes. Fear is the product of our self-interest.

In our Gospel, Apostles who really loved the Lord should have figured he didn’t call them to be “fishers of men” if they were to drown without the opportunity to answer his call. They should have recognized that anybody walking on the water had to be Jesus, the Son of God, not a ghost who would simply swallow them up in the waves. Nor should they have doubted that the man who miraculously fed the 5000 would be unable to calm the winds and the waves. Had they genuine love for the Lord they would have surrendered their wills to the will of their Lord and with confidence believed that being all powerful he would rescue them even from the elements.

So there is a powerful lesson for each of us in this study. If we find ourselves fearful and worried in the crises of life we have a third valuable solution for banishing our fears and worries by turning them over to Christ. To do this we have to develop our total love for the Lord, by putting on the will of Christ not just in words but in all of our actions.

Am I a fearful and worrying type of person; about my lack of friends, my health, my eternal destiny, or anything else? An honest answer to this question could provide me with a clue to the sincerity and intensity of my love for the Lord.

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