

Year C*Pentecost 4*2010*In Christ
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But now that faith has come, we are no longer subject to a disciplinarian,²⁶
for in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith.²⁷ As many of
you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.²⁸
There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no
longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.¹

Paul says simply and with clarity.
Faith has come.
We were baptized into Christ.
We are one in Christ.

Faith has come.

We so need a place where we are **no longer Jew or Greek, no longer slave or
free, no longer male and female.**

A place where we are neither republican nor democrat,
gay or straight,
old or young,
wealthy or poor.

We need a place where our belonging is never based on how much money
we have,
or what social circles we run in,
or what kind of education we do or don't have.

Here our belonging is stripped down to our willingness to enter into
relationship with the mystery of God in Christ.

It is that mystery which refines and heals and transforms every other part of
our lives.

This is what happens in Christ.

The gospel story tells of a man dramatically shattered. He lives in isolation
from human society, he is violent, unable to take care of his most basic

¹*The Holy Bible : New Revised Standard Version*. 1989 (Ga 3:25-28). Nashville: Thomas
Nelson Publishers.

needs of housing and clothing. All this because of the splintering forces of the demonic in human personality.

We know something of these splintering forces. We've seen them at work in our families and psyches. Forces of destructiveness which care nothing for peace, happiness, joy, community. We may not commonly call them demonic anymore but we know they are still legion.

We all know friends, loved ones who have fallen prey to these forces of addiction, greed, shaming, judgment, violence, isolation. We've seen our loved ones torn to psychological shreds.

We have seen their families destroyed by these powers.

We have seen how entrenched behaviors have lead someone we know down the path of madness.

Maybe you've gone down that path a ways. I have. I knew instantly what friend meant when he said, "I've never been to hell but I been to it's suburbs and I never want to get that close again."

Today's Jesus story is a story of liberation, healing, and restoration. If you can, forget about the pigs and the demons and the rushing of the herd down into the waters. That may speak of the upheaval caused by facing our healing but too often we moderns get side tracked by those poor pigs and the cost to the pig-herders. Forget them for a second.

Look at the man.

Then people came out to see what had happened, and when they came to Jesus, they found the man from whom the demons had gone sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind.²

Don't we all need healing?

Haven't we all lost our minds?

Don't you know what it's like to isolate yourself,

give in to your anger,

slide into a kind of madness.

We all need a place to heal,

²*The Holy Bible : New Revised Standard Version*. 1989 (Lk 8:35). Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

a place where Jesus can step out of the boat and into our lives,
a place where Jesus can step into our problems, our personalities and
families and world.

And that's what Jesus does here at St. Mary's.
Jesus steps right through Bread and wine,
right through the bible,
right through our life together,
binds our demons,
casts them out,
sends them tumbling over the cliff and into the sea.

I wrote that, "tumbling over the cliff into the sea."
I love that image of Christ sending our compulsions and addictions tumbling
over a cliff and into the sea. And to some extent that has been my
experience. Christ has liberated me from some things and set me free. But
right at that moment I remembered the seas.

Oh the poor sea, always the depository of our waste, our junk, our demons.
As soon as I wrote those words I thought of the poor gulf of Mexico and
how it continues to suffer because of our lust for control, power, and
independence.

So I take it back.
Don't forget about the pigs and the pig-herders, or the sea.
Think of the poor pigs.
Think of the poor pig-herders.
Think of the man and the disciples and us.

We all need faith to come.
We all need a place where we can be healed.
We all need to be one in Christ Jesus. . . pigs, people, and seas.
Don't leave anyone or anything out of the oneness promised us in Christ
Jesus.

Do you know there once was a Christian man named Origen, and he got in
trouble with the Church for saying that the love of Christ is so powerful that
one day even the demons would be converted by it and included in God's
final restoration of all things? This was centuries ago.

And maybe Origen was wrong, or at least presumptuous. Presumptuous in
the sense that you don't mess with the devil. Even if evil's final destiny is

its conversion into good it is in God's hands not ours. The devil remains
"our dread foe" in this world. But given that, isn't there something
compelling about a belief in a love able to heal everyone and everything?
The man clothed and in his right mind.
The pigs cared for and treated with dignity.
The seas kept clean and healthy.
Powers of corruption and division healed of their arrogance and hatred.

The great medieval poem which we sang last Sunday declares;
Oh love, how deep, how broad, how high,
how passing thought and fantasy,
that God, the Son of God, should take
our mortal form for mortal's sake.

The truth is we all need to be healed,
people, pigs and oceans.
When Christ steps out of the boat of his eternal Godhead and into the flesh
and blood of this world he does it to heal us,
and heal us all.

Pigs, people, and seas,
all of you are one in Christ Jesus.³

³*The Holy Bible : New Revised Standard Version*. 1989 (Ga 3:25-28). Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.