

May 8, 2020

Acts 13:26-33; John 14:1-4

During these post-Easter days as we read from the Acts of the Apostles, we too are anxious to hear the Word of God as preached by Paul at Antioch. Although we are already baptized Christians, we continue to search the Scriptures to discover anew the depth of *preparation* that God made for Israel to be able to recognize the Messiah and for us to embrace for his loving presence. (And we have quite a bit of time during these days of lockdown to search the Scriptures on our own – or as Bishop Barron suggests, to read the entire Acts of the Apostles!)

At Antioch, Paul was not timid in his preaching because he had all the credentials of a Pharisee to open the Hebrew Scriptures and he had a personal mission from the Risen Christ to preach the new Way. He must have done a good job because it was at Antioch that the community was first called “Christians.”

In today’s reading, Paul summarizes the central fact of Christianity: Christ died and rose from the dead; Christ is the One to whom God says, “You are my Son, this day I have begotten you.” This is the heart of the Christian message: Christ is the Son of God and Christ is risen – or there is no Christian faith or redemption.

For many years, Paul continued *preparing* his far-flung fledgling churches through letters – and even through his personal presence as a witness to Christ. He highlighted the teachings of the law and of the prophets that had been intended to *prepare*, first the Jews and then the gentiles, to receive the Messiah. Paul used all his gifts to build a firm foundation of formation for his hearers *preparing* the church to proclaim the faith until Christ’s return.

In the Gospel, Jesus carries a similar theme. He speaks of *preparation* as something ongoing. He attempts to console the apostles at the Last Supper by telling them that he is going to *prepare* a place for them. This assurance is not fully grasped by the apostles as they are grieved that Jesus will be betrayed. Although they have spent years with him, they do not fully understand God’s preparation for the kind of Messiah as revealed in their Scriptures. If they did, there would have been nothing more consoling for them than Jesus’ words that he goes to prepare a place for them!

If we think of our ordinary life, there are few words more consoling than “You will always have a place with us.” This could mean an actual place to live or a place in people’s hearts. Jesus says that when he leaves this world, the Trinity will make a home in us! And he assures us that when our life here is complete, he is *preparing* a place for us in God’s dwelling.

We are not all the same; each of us is unique; but we are all loved fully in the place *prepared* for us. Meanwhile we share a room here at Home, where each one lives for the other and all live for God.

The bird chosen as a symbol of our 175th anniversary is an invitation in an unexpected way for us to look back at God’s *preparation* in the Old Testament; Paul’s *preparation* of his fledgling churches; and Jesus’ forward *preparation* for our future home with God. Let’s use this time of long retreat to explore the mystery of a God who has PREPARED more for us than we could ever have hoped or imagined.

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