

## HOMILY FOR FRIDAY NOV. 13 2020

“Chosen Lady ... let us love one another ...”

Offered by Mary Ellen Sheehan, IHM

Texts: 2 John 4-9; Luke 17:26-37

Today, we have two readings where the respective writers address two different communities, each of which was struggling with potential corrupting influences emanating from the surrounding culture. For Second John, it was the creeping influence of Gnosticism that could pervert the consequences of a concrete commitment to our flesh incarnate God in Jesus Christ by escaping into elitist spiritualism. For Luke, it was a kind of legalism that could inhibit the new community of Jewish followers of Christ from reaching out to welcome newcomers who did not practice the more stringent legal tradition. This morning I want to reflect with you on our first reading.

The Second Epistle of John is one of the shortest epistles in our New Testament, only 13 verses, but does it *ever* deliver a potent message! Interestingly, the Letter is addressed to “a chosen Lady,” *Kyria* in Greek, an actual woman’s name that means *chosen lady*, and it is only in this epistle that we have this title. There is scholarly debate, of course, about whether this was an actual woman in charge of a church community in Ephesus or a metaphor for *the community itself as chosen*.

Well, this morning, I’m following the opinion that the “chosen lady” was an actual woman. And why? Because today is *also* the Feast of Mother Cabrini – St. Frances Xavier Cabrini, to be more precise – the first American citizen to be canonized, and she was *certainly* a “chosen Lady!” Maria Francesca Cabrini, born in northern Italy in 1850, gave herself first to teaching in an orphanage in her homeland, then founded the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart and then came to the United States in 1889 to care for the flood of poor Italian immigrants pouring into New York City. Her legacy continues in The *Cabrini Immigrant Services* in the lower east side of New York, which serves *today’s* immigrants, from Honduras and Guatemala and Haiti and elsewhere.

And of course, that just brings to mind all the other “chosen ladies” in a long line of them, beginning with Mary the Mother of Jesus, our Incarnate God. Some of these women began their great works in partnership with men – Mary and Joseph, for example – and others through extraordinary courage from their own awakened graced selves, called irresistibly into service of the needy. Here are a few of them: Anna and Simeon, Elizabeth, Martha, Mary, Mary Magdalene, Prisca and Aquilo, Dominic and Catherine of Siena, Francis and Clare of Assisi, Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross, Hildegard of Bingen, Gertrude the Great, Julianne of Norwich, Elizabeth of Hungary, Ignatius of Loyola and Mary Ward, Mary Euphrasia Pelletier, Madeleine Sophie Barat, Philippine Duchesne, Janet Erskine Stuart, Nano Nagle, Catherine McAuley, Frances Warde, Elizabeth Ann Bayley Seton, Catherine Spaulding, Jacques Joubert and Mary Lange, Louis Gillet and Theresa Maxis, Harriet Tubman and Levi Coffin, Sojourner Truth, Dorothy Day, Eunice Kennedy Shriver, Teresa of Calcutta, Rosa Parks, Coretta and Martin Luther King Jr., Angela Merkel, Glenda D. Price, Elizabeth Burns, John

Lewis and Lillian Miles, Greta Thunberg, Michelle and Barack Obama, Ruth Bader Ginsburg, and so many more, now and still to come.

This Letter of John begins so tenderly: “In truth, I love each of you, and not only I but all who have come to know the truth. This love is based on the truth that abides in us and will be with us forever. Grace, mercy, and peace will be with us” ... because we are in God. Just think of it! How all of these chosen women and men lived and still live this message: *Love God and care for your neighbor inclusively, tenderly and fully.*

Today, let us all recall who *our* “chosen lady” or “chosen gentleman” is and how she or he lives in us. Even more, let us recall how *we* are “chosen women” and “chosen men,” called to extend the “grace and mercy and peace” *already in us*, to each other and to our neighbors in need – challenged so critically in our culture today with climate change, COVID, and democracy fulfillment – that *all* will care for our Earth, that *all* will be healed or consoled when death occurs from COVID and that *all* will be included and cared for in our *United States* and all countries, struggling for Earth care and economic justice and inclusive human rights. Only then do we see the Beloved Community of God in our midst.