



SAINT LOUIS ABBEY



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Reading 1 1 Jn 5:5-13

Beloved: Who indeed is the victor over the world but the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

This is the one who came through water and Blood, Jesus Christ, not by water alone, but by water and Blood. The Spirit is the one who testifies, and the Spirit is truth. So there are three who testify, the Spirit, the water, and the Blood, and the three are of one accord. If we accept human testimony, the testimony of God is surely greater. Now the testimony of God is this, that he has testified on behalf of his Son. Whoever believes in the Son of God has this testimony within himself. Whoever does not believe God has made him a liar by not believing the testimony God has given about his Son. And this is the testimony: God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever possesses the Son has life; whoever does not possess the Son of God does not have life.

I write these things to you so that you may know that you have eternal life, you who believe in the name of the Son of God.

Responsorial Psalm Ps 147:12-13, 14-15, 19-20

Glorify the LORD, O Jerusalem;
praise your God, O Zion.
For he has strengthened the bars of your gates;
he has blessed your children within you.
 He has granted peace in your borders;
 with the best of wheat he fills you.
 He sends forth his command to the earth;
 swiftly runs his word!
He has proclaimed his word to Jacob,
his statutes and his ordinances to Israel.
He has not done thus for any other nation;
his ordinances he has not made known to them. Alleluia.

Gospel Lk 5:12-16

It happened that there was a man full of leprosy in one of the towns where Jesus was; and when he saw Jesus, he fell prostrate, pleaded with him, and said, "Lord, if you wish, you can make me clean."
Jesus stretched out his hand, touched him, and said, "I do will it. Be made clean."
And the leprosy left him immediately.



Then he ordered him not to tell anyone, but “Go, show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing what Moses prescribed; that will be proof for them.”

The report about him spread all the more, and great crowds assembled to listen to him and to be cured of their ailments, but he would withdraw to deserted places to pray.

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I hope your first week of school after the Christmas break
hasn't been too
traumatic.

Coming back from a two week break,
It's not easy to go from zero to 70 in a split second
on the educational superhighway,
not easy for teachers or students.

But it's a new year.
It's going to be different from the old one,
better than the old
one.

That's why it's appropriate the New Year begins
during the Christmas season.
Christmas celebrates how God rang out the old covenant
and rang in the new era of humanity's relationship
with God.
God became man so that men and women could become
God.

That's different than it was before
and much better than it was before that first
Christmas.

The unfortunate thing is that so many people



have not really taken God up
on his offer to become like him through his Son.

The time of Epiphany, which we are now in,
commemorates the manifestation
of the Saviors presence to
humanity,
the introduction by God to us of his Son
and of our first recognitions of his presence
among us.

We know, of course, that many people never did recognize
him,
many still do not and perhaps we too have doubts
sometimes.

It all seems incredible and too good to
be true,

A little child, born of a virgin is really God;
He grows into an apparently average young man
who earns his living as a carpenter.
And then His life takes a radical turn
as he is literally inspired by the Holy
Spirit.

Our acceptance of this revelation about Him
requires a lot of faith.

Another of the worlds great religions believes in another
Savior,



called the Buddha.

The story of his birth is a remarkable contrast with
Jesus birth.

The Buddha was the son of a king and queen,
and at his miraculous birth he staked a claim to the
earth

by walking four steps each to the N, S, E & W
speaking clearly in a thunderous voice the words

“There is no greater being than I
in the heavens earth or under the earth.”

Everybody would know from the get go
this was the Buddha Savior.

In today’s Gospel we see a different kind of Epiphany,
Jesus early in his career healing a leper.

It was a public demonstration of power, unusual power.

Whatever else He was, Jesus was a healer, but more.

There were, after all, other healers active in Jesus
time.

The story today makes me wonder.

Had this leper seen others get healed ?

Had he watched but been afraid or hesitant to
approach Jesus,

thinking it’s too good to be true ?

Jesus doesn’t force his healing on us or anyone,

and He doesn’t force

faith.



Faith accomplishes things.
Jesus didn't pick the leper out of the crowd and say
 " You need to be healed
 and I'm the one who is going to heal you."
The leper had to know, realize, really believe
 that Jesus could heal him.
Finally, in faith and trust, he approached Jesus and left it up
to Him.
 "If you want to do it, you CAN heal me."
 Faith opened the door for Jesus to act in that
man's life.

Right after Jesus' Baptism,
 his second epiphany which we'll celebrate on Sunday,
 Jesus was tempted by
 Satan
 to throw himself down from the temple in front of
everyone,
 so angels would swoop down from heaven &
 catch him.
"Show yourself and who you really are to the whole world
!"

Now that would have been an Epiphany
 everyone would have been forced to notice.
 Jesus resisted that temptation.

If Jesus had done what Satan wanted,
 People would have followed Jesus out of fear



or

They would have gone after him to
Do this for me, or do that.
Even as it was, Herod was curious about what Jesus could
do.

There was already a lot of misunderstanding
about the Messiah being an earthly king
who would drive off the Romans.

Jesus showing himself in such a compelling way
would have denied the spiritual reality and nature
of faith & love.
It would have made our relationship with Jesus and God
forced and magical rather than spiritual.

This Gospel story today shows
both Jesus humanity & the reality of
God.

In Mark's version of this story it says,
Jesus felt sorry for the leper.
In this version by Luke it just says "I want to heal you."

This story tells us about God's interest in us personally.

Our God cares, Our God is compassionate (suffers
with us)

and wants to help

us.

God so loved the world He sent his only Son



that we might be healed and live
forever.

To be healed and live forever
requires faith in the person and power of the healer,
the little child in the manger,
the young carpenter and the newly baptized
healer.

Here's another contrast with the Buddha savior.
A mother brought to him her little child who just died.
Bring him back to life, she
begs.

The Buddha did not.
Instead he gave the sorrowing mother a
practical lesson in the acceptance of inevitable
death.

Jesus was really different from anyone in the heavens,
the earth or under the
earth.

Saint John, the best friend of Jesus,
speaks for all the Evangelists and Apostles and
inspired writers
when he tells us :

“I write these things to you
so that you may know that you have eternal
life.”



If you know that, that you HAVE eternal life
you can begin living forever right now.
Eternal life is not different from now.
To believe that, to know that, takes faith.

Later on in the Gospels Jesus encounters
another person asking for healing,
a father asking Jesus to heal his son IF Jesus is
able.

Jesus tells that father
“Everything is possible for him who believes.”

The anguished Father speaks for all people when he
answers:

“Lord, I believe, but help my un-
belief.”

There’s a part of us
that believes the incredible story of God made man.
That is the deepest and best part of us
which needs God and more and fuller life.

We
believe.

But there is that other part of us that is so attached to this
world,
to the absorbing and addictive goods of this world,
to our bodies, to our senses and to science



that we are pulled towards unbelief.
It's so easy not to believe.
Pray every day that prayer. "Lord, I believe but help my
unbelief."

It's pretty clear from the Gospels

Jesus too had a hard time resisting those same human
temptations.

Jesus had to have faith, in His father, His
mission,

in Himself, in His ability to heal.

How did he handle it ?

The gospel tells us today he would withdraw to
deserted places

to

pray.

Faith accomplishes things, and prayer nourishes faith.

Let us pray together today for each other

as Jesus makes his Epiphany again in this

Eucharist.

Let us pray for a better new year,

that we will take Jesus at His word and not be afraid,

because He has conquered the

world.

Let us pray for all the good our faith makes possible in our
world



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and that we will be inspired to make it real,
that we will have the courage to make it real.

In the new year, every year
Jesus Christ is the way, the truth and the life.