

“Order Out Of Chaos”

- I. Introduction: Order Out of Chaos. When we lived in Leonia, N.J., each work day Peg and I would wake up early in the morning and prepare to cross the George Washington Bridge into Manhattan. In order to beat the rush hour, we needed to hit the bridge before 6:00 a.m. Usually that didn't work, so we typically joined hundreds of thousands of others also crossing the bridge during rush hour. It used to amaze me that there were not more accidents as ten lanes of traffic had to merge into four or five lanes as you crossed the bridge itself. In this process the cars would come incredibly close to one another, but rarely banged into each other. It was like a giant dance. Out of what seemed like chaos, order emerged.

- II. That's what God is doing constantly: Bringing order out of chaos. Today's reading from Genesis describes this process, Paul describes it, and Matthew describes it as well. Our God is in fact in the business of bringing order out of chaos. One of the best ways of understanding how God does this is to consider the ways in which the Trinity works. Today is a good day to do this because it is Trinity Sunday.

God is one in three: One substance which exists in three persons. Each of the three persons has a unique, dynamic role:

God the Father creates; God the Son redeems; And God the Holy Spirit renews.

Using verbs to describe God helps to us move away from seeing God as a “thing” to experiencing God as “action.” God can in fact be described as “energy” – pure and completely perfect energy. First, God created the world out of chaos with an order that gave it form and constancy. God entered into a partnership with us in God's human creation to care for this incredible world that had been created. Then, just as our Eucharistic Prayers tell us, because we abused creation, God sent his Son into the world in order to redeem us. God became one of us, a human being, in order to reduce the distance between us and our Creator. Again, God moved to bring order out of chaos. There's one more piece. As today's gospel tells us, when it was time for Jesus to return to be with his Father, he called his disciples together and gave them the Great Commission. He told them to go into all the world, making disciples, and that his authority, his power, would go with them. The Holy Spirit energized them for the mission they were given. They and we have become and are still becoming part of this great movement of God's energy. Throughout Salvation History, God has moved from outside us to be within us and then between us and among us.

- III. This is the dynamic of the Christian life: The movement of God from outside us, to be within us, and then to be between and among us. In a meditation on today's lectionary readings, The Reverend William Willimon has referred to a French Canadian film entitled *Jesus of Montreal*. We showed clips from this film during our Wednesday night series on the incarnation in which we looked at the presentation of Jesus Christ through the medium of film. In *Jesus of Montreal*, actors are hired by the church to stage a passion play. The play was meant to depict the final days of Christ's life, but the actual script was left to the actors. The film depicts how the actors begin to actually assume the qualities of the persons they were portraying. For example, one actor moved from presenting Jesus as a passive man to depicting him as the radical change agent that he was. The same actor also had to decide whether to step into a violent situation in order to defend one of the other actors. In doing so, he lost his life. The film illustrates the transformation that can occur when we open ourselves to become increasingly like Jesus. God's energy began to change the actors in unanticipated ways. What originally had begun as a play about God turned progressively into an experience of God within and between the actors. One way you could see this change was in the degree to which the actors were willing to sacrifice themselves for others.
- IV. The question for all of us who follow Christ is how much we are willing to sacrifice in order to help bring order out of chaos in the world around us. On the back page of our bulletin you can find a summary of the Ascension mission statement. We say there that our purpose is "enable ourselves and others to experience God in Christ, to seek and serve Him in others, to grow toward Christ, and to proclaim Him to the world." What we need to understand is that the Christ within us is committed to redeeming life around us in this world. If this Christ is given he freedom to grow in us, we will change – we will love in new ways, we will have a healthier focus upon ourselves, and we will extend ourselves to others even when we have no obligation to do so. We will come to know that God's love overcomes chaos and disorder.

Downstairs in our Parish Hall this morning we are holding a Ministry Fair. As the bulletin indicates, we are holding this fair both between our two morning services and after our 10:30 service. It is being held during these two different times so that no one is disadvantaged in being able to participate. There are approximately 40 ministry displays. Here's what I'd like to ask you to do – please go down and explore the exhibits. Our intent is to make sure that you know about all the ministries that are being provided in and beyond this parish. You may today or someday want to become a part of a particular ministry; you may want to encourage someone else to either participate in or receive loving support from one of these ministries. You may also want to have a richer and fuller idea about what's going on here at Ascension.

We are a parish filled with tremendous gifts and blessings. I believe that we are being invited to more fully recognize the gifts we have been given and live out our ministries as the Holy Spirit leads us. We are called to be God's co-creators in this world by expressing God's love to one another. I'd like to conclude with the following blessing:

Go forth into the world in peace:

Be of good courage,

Hold fast that which is good, Render to no one evil for evil.

Strengthen the fainthearted, support the weak,

Help the afflicted, Honor all persons.

Love and serve the Lord,

Rejoicing in the power of the Spirit.

And the blessing of God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit be upon you and remain with you always. *Amen.*