

Thermostat Christians

Homily for February 11-12th 2023

6th Sunday Ordinary Time

There is a very famous children's story, *The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe*, set in the land of Narnia. As the adventure opens Narnia is a land under the curse of the White Witch, Jadis. Sadly, in Narnia it is always winter but never Christmas. For Jadis' spell is very deep, that not only affects the land but the creatures in the land, fawns, beavers, and many other animals, all of whom can talk. If anyone of these creatures crosses Jadis she turns them into stone – like Mr Tumnus, the Fawn, and collects them in her evil castle court yard protected by the prowling and predatory wolf Maugrim and his underlings.

Narnia is a land that had once been enchanted and free, because it had been created in love by the great Lion, Aslan. But now, all signs of Aslan's warm presence have vanished, and this land is characterised as a bleak and fear-filled frigid domain of ice and snow

As the story unfolds, Aslan prepares to return to Narnia. In advance of his arrival who shows up but Father Christmas and proclaims that a thaw is coming for Aslan will soon appear. With time, after much conflict suffering, death and resurrection, of Aslan that is, Jadis is defeated and Narnia enters into a period of peace, harmony and summer warmth.

I started with this story because it helps to announce the theme for today's homily. We have been considering over the past month that as baptized Christians we share in the threefold ministry of Jesus as priest, prophet and king. A month ago with thought about the priestly ministry of Jesus and how this is associated with the Church's worship. Two weeks ago we considered the kingly dimension of Jesus' vocation and saw its association with the Church's service. This week we will be considering Jesus the prophet, and how the Church shares in the evangelizing dimension of Jesus' life.

He now anoints you with the chrism of salvation. As Christ was anointed Priest, Prophet, and King, so may you live always as a member of his body, sharing everlasting life.

In *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* Father Christmas is an evangelist. He is the one announcing that Jadis' bad news is no match to Aslan's Good News. It is always the case that in the world it can seem that the bad news of the modern day Jadis' is the only story-line to follow. But this is not the message of the Church who is always raising up the likes of Father Christmas' at times when things appear hopeless and heartless.

As we engage in the evangelizing ministry of Jesus Christ we announce by word that there is another story, that while less obvious than the Jadis news feed – when received, understood and accepted it can thaw hearts and give to people hope and confidence.

St Paul in the reading from 1 Corinthians speaks of the Gospel as the good news source that while hidden to many is the story worth reading and living.

⁶ Yet among the mature we do speak wisdom, though it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to perish.¹

When Paul refers to the mature he is referring to those who know their true identity in Christ and the opportunity afforded to them to share in the mission of Jesus. However he says this wisdom is not of this age, or the rulers of this age. What does he mean by this? When the Apostle speaks of “age” in this context he means the present world, which later in 1 Corinthians 7 he defines in this way:

For the present form of this age is passing away.²

This world in its present form is doomed to perish and so are all who conclude that it is always winter but never Christmas.

St Paul then goes on to declare:

⁷ But we speak God’s wisdom, secret and hidden, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. ⁸ None of the rulers of this age understood this; for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory³

So what is this secret wisdom that St Paul is referring to here? It is the understanding that in the midst of this present age where there are still many signs of winter, there is a new age, a spring time that is coming, the age of Jesus Christ. And it is the calling of the Church in her prophetic ministry to help people understand and discover how the breaking in of this other kingdom is actually taking effect even now in this world. But says St Paul, with reference again to the rulers of this age, they don’t understand this. And they did not recognize in Jesus – the Lord of Glory – the one who is the harbinger of this new age.

St Paul concludes this passage by quoting from the Prophet Isaiah how the day will come when the Kingdom of God, the new heaven and new earth will be fully realized. Of this time he exuberantly concludes:

***What no eye has seen, nor ear heard,
nor the human heart conceived,***

¹ [*The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition*](#) (1 Co 2:6). (1993). National Council of Churches of Christ.

² [*The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition*](#) (1 Co 7:31). (1993). National Council of Churches of Christ.

³ [*The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition*](#) (1 Co 2:7–8). (1993). National Council of Churches of Christ.

what God has prepared for those who love him”—

This is the Good News of the Gospel that in the present world is secret and hidden to many but in the age to come will be public and visible to all.

To take to heart the prophetic ministry of Jesus is to discover that we are not to be people who just take the temperature of the society, like a thermometer. No we are to be like a thermostat that is able to positively influence the temperature. This is what I mean.

A thermometer merely tells what the temperature is in a particular area. Think about this in relation to Narnia. If your thermometer, which you had kept warm in you parka reads 15 degrees and you enter Jadis castle where it is five degrees it won't be long before the thermometer reads five degrees. It always changes according to its environment.

The thermostat, however, does just the contrary. Instead of changing in accord with its environment, it actually changes the environment in accord with itself. It adjusts the room temperature. If you were to find a thermostat in Jadis castle and the room is five degrees but you set the thermostat at 20 degrees the temperature of the room will gradually change to conform to whatever the thermostat is reading. The room will become 20 degrees.

Thermometers passively reflect what's around them; thermostats actively affect what's around them. Those who understand that we are called to share in the prophetic ministry of Jesus have hearts and minds filled with knowledge of God and with this grace, then we will be like thermostats.

Let me end by telling you about a child I met a few weeks ago who is like a thermostat. I share this story with her's and her parent's permission.

Her name is Zoe, a Greek name by the way that means "life". Zoe is nine. I was at her school for a liturgy 12 days ago. After the Liturgy she came up to me and said Father Jonathan listen and she sang:

**The B-I-B-L-E yes it's the book for me
I stand with the Church on the Word of God
The B-I-B-L-E**

I had taught Zoe this song in preparation for her baptism. Last Sunday she was one of 14 school age children baptized at St Peter's. Her brother Alexander, seven, was also baptized with her. She exhibited such enthusiasm and excitement. Zoe was a thermostat Christian. She actively affected her environment. She so warmed my heart.

This is what the prophetic ministry of the Church is all about. To so touch minds and hearts with the Good News of Jesus Christ, that people experience a thaw in their lives and joy and purpose

because Jesus is on the move, turning hearts of stone into hearts of flesh so that with Zoe we can be thermostat Christians and sing:

**The B-I-B-L-E yes it's the book for me
I stand with the Church on the Word of God
The B-I-B-L-E**