

## A Fresh Start

Today's readings are so appropriate at the beginning of a new school year. In the Gospel for today Jesus is celebrating the message that with his coming there is an opportunity for a new start, a new beginning.

Jesus is responding to the people who always opposed him, known as the scribes and the Pharisees. They were always suspicious of Jesus and questioned both his motives and his actions. They did not want to listen to Jesus nor were they open to his invitation to receive the fullness of God's loving care and presence. Jesus threatened them because they did not want to consider growing and maturing, rather they wanted everything to remain the same. Jesus on the other hand wanted people to come to discover the depth and the extent of God's love for them. This is why he referred to himself as the bridegroom. Think about this image with me a little bit more.

Perhaps some of you had the opportunity to attend a wedding this summer, of an uncle, aunt, cousin or family friend. As a priest I get to go to lots of weddings – I actually get to preside at them. One of my favorite moments is when the bridegroom sees his bride walking down the aisle, his face beaming as his beloved approaches. Jesus wants us to know that he looks upon us as the bridegroom looks upon his bride. The Jewish people had an understanding that when God came into the world as a person, his relationship would be like that of the bridegroom relating to his bride. There is a verse from the Prophet Isaiah where it is stated this way:

***“As a bridegroom rejoices in his bride / so shall your God rejoice in you.***

So here is the first thing we want to celebrate as you start a new school year. God's looks upon each of you with a tender love that is like that of the bridegroom. He cherishes you, and wants you to become all that you can be this year. Maybe you are just starting at the Schola this year, or perhaps you are entering into grade twelve after many years in this community. Be open to encountering God's love for you in ways that are new, be it through your studies, friendships, worship, in the music you learn, the struggles you face and the achievements you celebrate. Allow as well for the Holy Spirit to assist you in coming to a greater understanding of who you are as part of a community that wants to put God at the centre.

This brings us to the reading from 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians. Here St. Paul wants to guard us from setting up attitudes where we stand in judgement of each other, something that can happen in communities, be they schools or churches. What St. Paul wants all of us to realize is that as we discover the gift of God's love for each of us we are to then also discover that our life is a gift that has been given to us by God. I like what St. Augustine, who died in the year 430 once said about this:

***Your life is God's gift to you, what you do with your life, is your gift to God***

St. Paul teaches us that we are to cultivate an understanding that we are “servants of Christ and steward's of God's mysteries”. What does this mean for St John's Choir Schola? Well let me begin by saying something to the teachers. You have been entrusted with a vocation that allows

you to extend the vision of Jesus' care by remembering that when you teach your students you are in fact serving Jesus. Since the coming of Jesus into the world we are to realize that every student is someone in whom Jesus is present. Not only are you servants of Christ but stewards of the mysteries of God. A steward is someone who has been entrusted with the goods that belong to another. In this case the goods are the mysteries of God. From the Greek verb *myō*, meaning "to be shut or closed," especially of the lips or eyes. In Paul's writings it refers to God's plan of salvation, which was hidden in God but is now revealed in Christ<sup>1</sup>. Therefore teachers who have the opportunity through the three pillars of Catholicism, a Classical Education and Choral Music to be stewards of these mysteries and to assist your student in discovering the mysteries of God.

To those of you who are students may you also know that you too are servants of Christ. You are to live this out by being attentive to your studies with diligent hard work, and by being open to asking for assistance when you are challenged by something in the curriculum that you find hard to understand. Also, keep in mind that you are also entrusted with a kind of stewardship. The choral music you will sing, the classical tradition that you will discover is all built on the foundation of the Catholic Faith which has been lived out for more than 2000 years. Approach your studies with a thankful mind and generous hearts as you learn together the beauty, goodness and truth that are at the core of all you will learn and experience this year.

As you keep in mind these teachings from today's readings that you are cherished and loved by Jesus who wants you to discover the freedom that is yours in living as his servant and steward, St. John's Choir Schola will be a place where with St Augustine you will apply these words in how you approach your year be it as a student and teacher:

***Your life is God's gift to you, what you do with your life, is your gift to God***

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<sup>1</sup> Montague, G. T. (2011). [\*First Corinthians\*](#) (p. 303). Baker Academic.