

Lent 5
Year B 2018

John 12:20-33

Come Holy Spirit, give life to my words.

In the name of God, creator, redeemer and giver of life.

Amen.

“Sir, we wish to see Jesus.”

A simple straightforward request.

Or is it?

A request by gentiles, the “others”
to see Jesus.

The One who is the manifestation of
the One true living God.

The Greeks request is delivered to Jesus
by Andrew and Philip.

And Jesus responds with,
what appears to me,
to be a convoluted and possibly
incomprehensible string of phrases.

“Sir, we wish to see Jesus.”

Jesus’ response, in part,
points to the heart of
the request of the Greeks.

....Those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

What if we, like Andrew and Philip, hear:

Those who reject their current life,
those who instead, follow me,
will keep their new life for eternity.

That changes the response for me
from random phrased to the core of Jesus’ ministry.

Karoline Lewis:

The request of the Greeks is critical for our time.

They ask to see.

They don’t request proof.

They don’t ask for an argument.

They don’t need an apologetic.

They just want to see.

They get what “come and see” is all about –
an invitation to be.

An invitation to abide.

An invitation to relationship.

An invitation to relationship.

The heart of God's desire for all creation – relationship.

We have a hard time these days with relationship.

It's hard to weigh through the negativity
even when we try really hard,
our buttons get pushed.

And when my buttons get pushed
it becomes me vs. them

The them that refuse to believe,
behave, or conform to my set of rules,
beliefs, and acceptable behaviors.

Hard as I try,
I behave in ways that
I find so distressing and intolerable in others.

I can slide down that slippery slope of
"Who thinks that way?"

Translated who doesn't think exactly like I do?

Or "Really? Who would do that?"

Translated, I would never do such a thing!

And while there may be some kernel
of truth in those statements,
I am forced to realize that
I'm stepping right into the dynamic
of me vs. them that I so deplore
and deeply believe runs in opposition
to everything following Jesus stands for.

Relationship.

Not just relationships that are easy and comfortable.

But radical relationships
that we have to work for,
that draw us beyond our selves,
where we come face to face
and heart to heart with the other.

With the Greeks who wish to see Jesus.

With the widow, orphan, the unsheltered,
the addicted, the afflicted, the gang banger,
the leper.

Those who need to see and know Jesus.

You've previously heard me speak highly
of Fr. Greg Boyle, a Jesuit priest,
who has worked with gang members
in Los Angeles for thirty years.

In 1988 he founded Homeboy Industries.

Homeboy now includes a bakery,
The Homegirl café and catering,
silkscreening, grocery, farmers market,
and solar energy installation.

All of which help to employ and empower
former gang members, men and women.

In addition, Homeboy provides access to
tattoo removal, addiction and behavioral health services,
legal representation, domestic violence prevention and education.

Hundreds of organization across the globe
have been launched with assistance
from Homeboy to provide gang intervention services.

Fr. Boyle insists that our way forward is through radical kinship.

In his words:

At Homeboy Industries we don't prepare for the real world – we challenge it.

*For the opposite of the “real world”
is not the “unreal world” but the kinship of God.*

*Therein lies our authenticity as people of faith
and card-carrying members of the human race.*

*In this authentic take,
survival of the fittest is displaced by
the survival of the “unfittest.”*

Cherry-picking makes way for “reverse cherry picking.”

*What if we ceased to pledge our allegiance
to the bottom line and stood,
instead, with those who line the bottom?*

Us versus Them.....or just Us?

Good people/bad people...or just God's people?

Judgment or awe?

Not some accepted/some rejected?

No, the rejected – the widow, orphan, stranger – are to be favored.

Fr. Greg Boyle – Barking to the Choir

It is this desire,
this vision of kinship,
that draws the Greeks,
the others, us,
to Jesus.

The desire to quit exhausting ourselves
with anger and fear and frustration
but to let go, to reject our current lives
and, instead, to really see Jesus.

The invitation is to come near,
to learn, to listen, and to love.

All that god desires is made evident through Jesus.

Radical kinship, loving care for the most vulnerable.

Loving care for the “other” whoever that may
be to each of us.

What does this mean for us,
individually, and for us,
the community of St. Andrew's?

The gospels remind us over and over again that
the time is at hand, the hour has come,
we have come to this hour,
to stay awake.

Now is the time.

Not in some distant future
we may not live to see
but now.

Here and now.

We stand on the precipice
ready to step out in faith,
to draw near to the other.

We have been given the opportunity
to erase the lines, the boundaries,
the suspicions,
that divide the haves and the have nots.

We have the potential to
show the world the Kingdom of God.

We have in front of us
the option to show all those
who are fearful that the least among
us are, in actuality, just like us.

Those who have the same hopes,
dreams, and desires as all the rest of us.

We have been invited into the
radical kinship of God
in this time and this place.

Our time.

This place which is given
To us by God for the glory of God.

What will we do?

How will we proceed?

Will we accept the invitation,
grudgingly, as we so often do
when invited.

Much rather wanting to be somewhere else.

Appearing for appearances sake.

Never living into the joy intended
in the act of invitation by the host.

Fr. Greg Boyle again:

*The ground beneath our feet
is the Kingdom of God, the Pure Land.*

It's not around the corner, it is the corner.

Kinship is not a reward bestowed at the end.

It's here, it's now, it's at hand and within our reach.

And this moment is the only one available to us.

Are we willing to accept the invitation
with open hands and hearts?

Will we show forth the Kingdom,
the radical kinship,
to those who dare to ask,

“Sir, we wish to see Jesus?”