

Third Sunday after the Epiphany, Year C
January 26, 2025

Boy, you all really didn't want me to read my Annual Report as the sermon this morning.

And fair warning, in all probability, there's not one person here today whom I will not offend, so as they say, "fasten your seat belts."

As we heard in this morning's Epistle, we are all of the same body: when one of us suffers, we all suffer together; when one of us is strong, happy, delighted, full of hope, we rejoice.

What happened this week? Flurries of emails - Bishop Budde emails to be exact: inappropriate, it needed to be said, rude, brave, unnecessary, courageous, negative; that it's inappropriate to address the president directly. I was tempted to call Bishop Shannon and tell her there was no way we could have our Annual Meeting; how on earth are we going to be able to sit at table together and enjoy the beautiful food offerings we have prepared for the delight of one another?

*We are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord,
and we pray that all unity may one day be restored;
And they'll know we are Christians by our love.*

One of us commented that Bishop Budde's remarks were meant to embarrass the newly elected president in front of his family, friends and electorate. No, they were intended – in Bp Budde's own words – to communicate that one of the greatest qualities of leadership is mercy.

Our first task as disciples of Christ is to love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind and with all our strength. That means putting aside all thoughts of self-aggrandizement: desire for power, worship of money, coveting someone else's life and to always have God in our heart, our soul, our mind and in our actions. Our second task is "like unto the first:" to love all those around us – our friends, our neighbors, our family, those who are strangers, those who are folks we have never met and probably never will, halfway around the world, to the north or south of us, to the east or west, Christians, Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, people who break our laws in hope of finding safety for their children – love those around us as we love ourselves. What does that mean? It means everyone should have the same opportunities, privileges, perks, advantages that I have: four walls and a roof; a bed to sleep in; clean running water with flushing toilets; enough food for every member of my family; if not a car, some form of affordable transportation; a job with a salary commensurate with the work I do; schools for my children; a dependable police force; health resources. That's the minimum. Most of us in this room have quite a bit

more, or at least the possibility of having more if we want it. Everyone having everything they need is something to aspire for, to work towards. After all, didn't Jesus say, the poor will always be among us. Or might it be more? If we all believe it to be possible, if each of us were to respect the dignity of every human being, maybe what is a dream today can become tomorrow's reality.

The third task we have as Jesus' disciples is to make Jesus known in the world – by our words, but more importantly by our actions. That's the ministry of hospitality.

We will work with each other, we will work side by side.

And we'll guard each one's dignity, and save each one's pride.

And they'll know we are Christians by our love.

I believe there were three people in that room last Tuesday morning as Bishop Budde began to speak - in that vast cathedral, that House of Prayer for All People: a rather small, diminutive woman dressed in a red floor-length vest and ruffled sleeves, a somewhat imposing figure dressed in suit and tie, and Jesus Christ. And I believe, in a totally unselfish gesture of hospitality, Bishop Budde took the hand Jesus was offering and placed it in the President's hand, affording him the opportunity to acknowledge and recognize the power and glory of the One Lord Jesus Christ, yes, even as his family, friends, constituents, and the rest of the world looked on from afar, and of course, he was embarrassed! Who wouldn't be embarrassed if Jesus knocked on the front door, sat down in your living room, and saw the dust bunnies and smelled the kitty litter.

We will walk with each other, we will walk hand in hand;

And together we'll spread the News that God is in our land.

And they'll know we are Christians by our love.

Mr. President, may I introduce you to the most powerful man on earth?