

**"Evidence of the Divine"**  
Homily of January 26, 2003  
by Kate Nauer

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Jesus came and Jesus tells us, "Come and follow me, and I will make you fishers of people." And what do you think that means, when Jesus says, "Come and follow me, I'll make you fishers of people?" I mean, to follow him - that makes sense, we have to believe in the Gospel, repent, and understand that this time, right here, right now, is the reign of God, is the Kingdom of God. But to be fishers of men and women? That takes some imagination.

The poet William Blake coined the phrase, "Imagination is evidence of the divine." I know imagination helps me to rationalize or explain that which I know to be true, but I can't explain it on my own. You take the size of the universe - how do you explain that? It helps to use our imagination. Or how about the age of God? My 7 year old daughter asked me recently, "Mom, how much older is God than Grandpa?" (Laughter!) I told her to go ask Grandpa, and then get back to me! I'm still waiting for the answer!

Or the one question that I guess most of us ask ourselves at some point in our lives - what happens when we die? When my own kids were little, I would tell them that when we die, we go back to God. And that used to work, when they were little. But I can see it on their faces that that explanation, that answer, isn't going to last much longer. They want to know more. They don't know this yet (I know it, they don't know) but pretty soon they're going to have to decide for themselves what they think happens after they die, and how to live, and also how to prepare to die. But the truth is, we really don't know the size of the universe (or if you prefer, the multiverse) or the age of God, or what happens when we die. So what do we do about that? We create stories and tales to answer the unanswerables, just like Jesus did. We learn to do this from the time that we are very, very small.

You can watch children play - their world is filled with imagination. In an afternoon, they can create and destroy entire kingdoms. That's what my little boys do - little girls tend to play house, they tend to fix things and celebrate. They tend to be bossy, little girls! (Laughter!) Maybe big girls, too. By using their imagination, they are finding out about the world that they live in. And as they play, they are coming to understand that they have options and that there are different solutions to all situations. One of our tasks as parents and as ministers is to try to help our children find God in the imaginative as well as in the real, just like Jesus did.

As the Youth Minister, one of my greatest pleasures is that I get to work with young people who, even though they're on the cusp of adulthood, they're not bashful about calling upon their imaginations. We can spend hours in the Youth Ministry office just

pondering and imagining what a particular Youth Mass might look like, or how a Confirmation retreat might take shape. Their creative imaginations are boundless and, thankfully, they don't seem to be in a hurry to lay aside the playfulness that imagination can provide. When I am invited over to one of their homes for dinner or whatever, I'm always delighted when I go into their rooms and I see that they still have their action figures and their Power Puff people and their Legos. They still have all those things laying around because they haven't given up on the hope of goodness over evil, and lightness over darkness. And can you imagine what a gift that is to us, as a Church today, that kind of optimism and imagination? If you spend some time with a group of teens, you discover the gift they have for seeing that which is not yet there. It's incredible, the knack they have for integrating the present with the imaginative. And our Youth Masses are an example of the creativity and the giftedness that our young people bless us with. They are joyful reminders to us all of the need to keep imagination alive throughout all of our Church, and I think young people do that. And by using their imaginations, they remind us of what could be, just like Jesus did.

So imagination - do you think God has an imagination? I think God must have a huge imagination. How else could we explain the beauty of nature and the changing of the seasons? Or how about the genius of musical composition? Two people both created by God - one genius goes off and creates a symphony, and the other genius sits down and bangs out a rock opera. Evidence of the divine imagination alive and gifting our world.

It's awesome imagination. But what happens when imagination runs out? It would be nice if we could just imagine that the tension in the Middle East would disappear, or that the economy could turn itself around and everyone's jobs would be secure tomorrow. Or with an imagination, we could pretend that the crisis in the Church wasn't happening. But, in playing with imagination like that we run a great risk. We risk slipping into denial and fooling ourselves that we have no part in being a part of the solution, and that's a very dangerous place to find ourselves. I think a better solution is to turn to our Gospel and to do exactly as it asks us - to believe, to believe in the Good News that we can make a difference. Believe that, together, we can bring about peace, healing, and justice to the places in our world that are in need. And, as with most things, the hardest part may be in the knowing where to begin, because let's face it - our Church and our world are on the brink, and it can feel pretty overwhelming.

But, fortunately for us, we have a partner in Jesus. Two thousand years ago, in Bethlehem, God broke through to the human experience in the person of Jesus Christ. And, in giving us Jesus, God gave the divine flesh and a voice. And, in Jesus, God gave us a blueprint for how to live our lives and how to shape our ministries - lay ministry and ordained ministry. But, mostly, what Jesus came to show us to do was how to love one another, especially how to love the one that is different from us, and love is always a great place to start.

The kind of love that Jesus modeled for us is a love that knows no political or religious boundaries. The love that Jesus desires of us does not seek color, or race, or nationality or position. In fact, this love delights when opposites attract and become one force. This divine love is offered so that we might share it with others, and it's free of fear. It's grounded instead in trust and openness to the other, and it's exactly how Jesus lived. This is love that we have as gift of the cross, and it's selfless and life-giving; it's not life-taking. It doesn't have to destroy the other in order to survive. This love survives because it is not rigid, and it's not cold, and it's not unforgiving. Rather it thrives because it depends on love being returned and reciprocated. Divine love doesn't hold a grudge; instead divine love listens time and time again with the ears of the heart, seeking ways to coexist with one another, peacefully and meaningfully. And, finally, this love holds license to dream things that are not yet and ask why.

So who wouldn't want a piece of this love? It's available to all of us, it's inside each of us, waiting - sometimes patiently, other times anxiously. But some shifting and adjusting may be in order to take possession. This really isn't any other than what Simon and Andrew had to do two thousand years ago to follow Jesus - they had to choose between something radically different and out of the ordinary, and the norm. They were willing to give something up in order to gain something of greater value. I'm sure that they had to examine their own political positions, their economic status and definitely their religious attitudes before they could make a mature choice to take up and follow Jesus and become fishers of men and women.

But choose they did; and, in so doing, they seemed to grasp that things transform and grow and take on new life. They do that best when we have the courage to move with them beyond the familiar and into the unknown. It's often a slow and tedious process, but change doesn't happen in our time, it happens in God's time. And it's usually not easy - we learn it as we live it. It helps to remember that we're a pilgrim Church and we're on a journey. We're not asked to carry the Gospel alone, but alongside one another in humility and with fidelity. And that, on the timeline of creation, we're somewhere between the "now" and the "not yet". We're not yet complete - we're not even close to being complete.

The reign of God is at hand, it is in our hands, and tomorrow it will be in our children's hands. But today, there is plenty for us to do alongside the spirit of love. There's plenty for us to do in our Church, in our families, and in our government. Love, then, is what the Gospel asks of us today - love that knows all things, and bears all things, and believes all things. Let's go forth then and love one another as Jesus loves us, deeply and with divine imagination. Amen.