

I would to thank the Liturgy committee for the opportunity and honor to co-preside today with Chris.

In the name of our Creator, Redeemer and Holy Spirit.

Amen.

In today's Gospel we are hearing about one of Jesus' miracles, the healing of the ten lepers. What is striking about this story of course is why does only one of them come back to thank Jesus? What's happened to the other nine? This caused me to pause and look up the word Samaritan, a person who does good deeds out of compassion and not because of any hope of reward. So, does this mean that only one out of ten of us is a good Samaritan? Well, I am looking out at our community and all I see are good Samaritans. How did each of us here become the "one"? We all came here from many points of view, but it is our belief in Jesus that brings us together. We are all the faithful "one".

What is the difference between faith and belief? Many people believe that things exist, it is more of a factual mental process of accepting things, we've been taught so we believe.

The word "faith" is much more abstract and difficult to define. Faith is putting your trust in something you can't see. You cannot be taught "faith", it is something inside of you. It is this intangible feeling that brings us all together here. For it is our faith in Jesus that gives us eternal life. Maybe the other nine lepers who went about their business couldn't see past the facts and have faith or perhaps they eventually did.

Earlier, I mentioned that we are all representative of the "one". It is our job to go out into the world when we leave here and work on finding people like the other nine and spread the word of the Gospel. Sometimes this can feel like an overwhelming responsibility, but we all do this everyday just by being our authentic selves.

David and I have experienced a lot of loss this past year with the passing of close family members, it's been a real test of our own faith. There have been days that we've wanted to walk away, just like the other nine. But, we are here, why? because we share this intangible feeling with you, and that is Christ's love.

I read an article the other day from the Atlantic Monthly by the columnist Derek Thompson. The subject of the article was about how Americans are losing their religion. He graphed religious affiliation from about 1972 to the present. In the graph there was a sudden and continually rise in non believers after 1990. "What happened in 1990, he asked?" He attributed the upswing to 3 historical events.

1. the association of the Republican party with the religious right.
2. the end of the Cold War and
3. eventually 9/11

The point of the article was to illustrate that history tends to unfold in messy cycles with actions and reactions. The combination of Roe vs Wade, no fault divorce and the sexual revolution empowered a the Christian right and the Republican party welcomed them and their money with open arms. This entire process has politicized God and religion, we all see this played out everyday in the news cycle. But, he goes on, it's not all bad, today's young people may not be able to quote Bible, but they believe in social issues for the greater good such as universal health care, so in effect the religious right and with it, the Republican party are driving so many young people away, it will ultimately be their demise. As you can see, it was a fascinating article.

Faith and belief go together with the word endurance, or the ability to withstand something challenging. We as a community are challenged everyday, so many of us have to come out constantly in our daily lives.

Faith in Jesus is not part of a race. Faith in Jesus is not part of a messy cycle in history. Faith in Jesus is a marathon, a marathon we walk together as a community of faith, for we each represent that one out of ten that believes in the love of Jesus.

Good news!