

## 14<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time - year C 2007 Is 66:10-14; Lk 10:1-12

1. In a world that is filled with prejudice and hatred
2. In a world where religion has become the excuse for and the cause of violence and war
3. In a world where terrorism has enabled nation after nation to limit personal freedoms, spy on its own citizens and deny people their supposedly inalienable rights.
  - a. It might come as a surprise that the latest document from the Vatican deals with none of these vital issues, but rather with how we worship.
  - b. Or rather, how we used to worship.
4. You might have heard that yesterday, the Vatican granted permission to every priest to celebrate the Latin Mass. But that is not quite true.
  - a. We could always celebrate mass in Latin - just like any other language.
  - b. This permission is to celebrate mass using the old form of mass;
    - i. the one with the priest facing the altar and not the people,
    - ii. the whispered prayers,
    - iii. the silence of the people,
    - iv. the communion only under the form of bread  
(1) and only on the tongue.
5. Many people are deeply upset that this old form of mass is again permitted
  - a. because they say it will further divide our church
    - i. At a time when we need unity to help people find God  
(1) in all the uncertainty of the modern world.
6. However many others are ecstatic
  - a. Because they say the only way the church can face the uncertainty of the present,
    - i. Is by returning to the tried and true forms of the past.
7. There is a great deal of truth to this.
  - a. After all, returning to the past is the basis of what we do at school,
    - i. Reading the classics
    - ii. Studying history
    - iii. And learning the great ideas of past people.
  - b. Returning to the past is what we do at home
    - i. Raising our children  
(1) by following the wisdom of our parents.  
(2) and avoiding their mistakes
  - c. Thus many argue that returning to the past is what we should do as a church.
    - i. For returning to the past is the basis of what we call the tradition;  
(1) that vast body of knowledge and practice and yes, prayer  
(2) that teaches us how people in the past found God.
    - ii. How else, they argue can we know who God is in the present,  
  
(1) if we do not find God in the past?

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8. The people of Israel would have agreed.
  - a. For if there was a period of time in which they believed God could be found
  - b. It was during the reign of King David.
    - i. Israel was a great nation
    - ii. Faithful to God and respected by all.
  - c. As a result they always looked back to David and his kingdom,
    - i. And longed to return to it
      - (1) after it had been destroyed by the Babylonians
        - (a) in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC.
  - d. Because the people of Judah in the 6<sup>th</sup> century believed
  - e. they would find their past kingdom , their king and their God in Jerusalem.
  - f. It was this same longing
    - i. that drove the people of Judea to follow Jesus
      - (1) in the first century AD.
  - g. Because they believed
    - i. they had found their past kingdom, their king and their God in Jesus.
9. And yet when the people of Judah returned to Jerusalem
  - a. they did not find their kingdom
  - b. They found a destroyed city exactly as they had left it a generation before.
  - c. Empty of everything - even it would seem God.
10. However it was precisely in the face of this emptiness
  - a. that the prophet Isaiah shouts that Jerusalem should rejoice
  - b. For God is using that empty city
    - i. which to them seemed like a tomb
    - ii. as a womb,
      - (1) To give birth to a people
        - (a) who are not ruled over by a king
        - (b) but cared for by a wet nurse.
  - c. And in a world where female deities were the stuff of paganism
    - i. and Kingly rule was seen as the image of the divine.
      - (1) God is revealed as the one caring for the people like a mother.
  - d. What was God doing? Isaiah knew. What God always does: something new.
11. This was also why Jesus sent those seventy missionaries out
  - a. to tell everyone that the kingdom that they had hoped for had arrived.
    - i. That would not have surprised the people;
      - (1) because people all over in Jesus' day were promising that.
    - ii. What did surprise them was how.

- b. For according to Jesus this kingdom would not come

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- i. with a host of armed soldiers led by a glorious king
  - c. but with a couple of unarmed preachers
    - i. without even a purse, bag or pair of sandals to call their own.
  - d. And God would not be found in conquest and battle..
    - (1) but in shared peace, a meal and the healing that flowed from them.
    - ii. That was where their kingdom would be found,
  - e. What was Jesus doing? Isaiah would have known.
- 12. He would have said it was God the midwife God the mother,
  - a. God the one whose kingdom is a meal, is shared peace and healing.
  - b. God, whose presence is revealed by doing something new.
- 13. IN our terror- filled, war - ravaged world,
  - a. more and more people look to the past for security
  - b. Stability and for a sign of the presence of God.
    - i. It is why some Muslims have become more religious
    - ii. Why some Jews have become more observant
    - iii. And why some Catholics have clamored for years
      - (1) for the ability to worship using the old mass;
      - (2) an ability which was granted them yesterday.
- 14. IT is too early to know whether will be a source of comfort
  - a. Or whether it will write on the face of the church
    - i. the same strife and divisions writ large on the world
      - (1) where our collective return to our pasts
        - (a) has caused Jews to turn their back on Muslims,
        - (b) Muslims to turn their back on Christians
        - (c) and Christians on Jews
- 15. We know that the old mass is not mandatory
  - a. and that the vast majority of Catholics will continue to celebrate the mass we know and love. . .
  - b. which ironically was also an attempt to return to an earlier form -
  - c. THE ancient form we see reflected in the Gospel today
  - d. in its command to share a meal
  - e. share peace
  - f. share healing and thus proclaim the kingdom.
  - g. So I guess none of us can escape our pasts.
    - i. And that is not a bad thing
  - h. But we live in the present, and it was the needs of the present
    - i. that caused the Church to introduce the new form of mass 40 years ago,
      - ii. so that a world riven by war and fear

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- iii. might hear clearly in their own language that message of peace,
- iv. draw closer to that shared meal
- v. and experience the healing which are the signs of the kingdom and thus the presence of God.
- vi. Was it what the people expected? Of course not!
- vii. And we can take comfort in that.
- viii. Because God is found in the UN expected
- ix. And God is the one who by definition does something new.