

Fr. John Sassani
Homily Given on January 21, 2007
Third Sunday in Ordinary Time
Liturgical Year C

The message of the Gospel today reminds me of Rene Dubos, the biologist and environmentalist who gave us the famous phrase, "Think globally – act locally." Jesus is doing that in the Gospel. Like many other Jewish men, He was in the habit of reading the Sacred Scripture at the Sabbath synagogue service. Today, He is at the beginning of His ministry and chooses a reading that expresses His global ministry. He is sent by the Father to bring freedom, to enlighten those in darkness, to concretely bestow God's favor on others. During His earthly life, He was limited to a very small piece of earth, to a very few people who met Him, heard Him, experienced the favor of God through Him...but His global mission had begun.

The passage from St. Paul gives us insight into the ongoing way that Christ acts locally. Paul experienced it on the road to Damascus, when the light of Christ blinded him into seeing, when he was set free. By his encounter of Christ and his baptism, Paul was changed. He was changed into a Christian, a little Christ, which is to say, into Christ – as were you and you and you and me. We have become Christ, all of us and each of us individually.

God's global plan is that Christ is the new beginning of everything. He acts locally by making us into His Son, so that the global mission of Christ can happen for others at every time and place. He does this to me, to the Pastoral Associates, to our Religious Ed teachers and Ministers of Care, to all of us so that people in the darkness of discouragement can experience the light of Christ...so that people held captive in unbelief can experience the favor of God...so that people who are burdened by alienation, sin, remorse, guilt can experience the freedom the Christ offers.

In the Christian faith, we aren't just given gifts. The gift of Christ is given to us so that we can become Him. St. Augustine said that Christians receive Christ in the Eucharist so that we can become what we receive. That's how Christ's global mission of enlightening, liberating, bestowing the favor of God happens locally.

Let's be mindful of what we need and not only go to Him but believe that we are given what we need and more at this Eucharist. A real responsibility flows from that: that we in turn give to others what we have received. That's how life in Christ works.