

“The Grand Interruption”
Saint Michael and All Angels
December 2, 2007

Texts:

Romans 13:8-14

Matthew 24:37-44

Advent I

Year A-

Twelve years ago this month, I took my first mission trip to Puerto Rico. I was asked by the Rector to lead the service and preach in Spanish; he wanted the service to be bilingual.

It was a rural church and most of the communicants did not speak English. I worked for weeks on my liturgical biddings and the syntax of my sermon...I learned that the congregation had been learning several English responses, within the liturgy..

As the morning worship began, I realized that the rustic P.A. system was not working correctly, and as I stood before the congregation, I tapped on the microphone and declared in English: “There’s something wrong with this device!” And they responded back: “And also with you!”

In the interruption of laughter, we realized one word we had in common – “Alleluia!” We exclaimed it together and then began to sign the opening hymn.

That story has come to mind this week as we begin Advent and celebrate ten years of service in the Jubilee neighborhood.

The first part of the story comes to mind because it reminds us that something is wrong in the world. The second part speaks to us as well. When God comes among us we want to declare, “Alleluia”...and realize that we are all beloved children of God: “There’s something wrong with this device” is translated in the Jubilee neighborhood:

There’s something wrong when:

- People are homeless;
- Drug houses rule the neighborhood;
- Public schools are broken;
- Unemployment and underemployment reign;
- Children and teenagers are searching for belonging and opportunity; and
- Streets are dangerous and crime-ridden.

And “Alleluia” and belovedness are translated in the Jubilee neighborhood:

- Mutual partnership and friendship;
- Housing;
- Safety and police protection;
- Green space;
- Afternoon programs;
- Head Start; and
- Employment.

LaSheryl and Anna Maria, staff members in the Jubilee neighborhood, were invited to come forward to share personal stories.

Note: The Rector concluded the sermon as follows:

Something is wrong in our world and each person is a beloved child of God.

The season of Advent tells us that God knows these realities and determined in love to give us his son and through Christ’s incarnate love that each of us would reach out in generosity and service.

G. K. Chesterton called the birth of Jesus “The Grand Interruption”...Christ comes alongside of us as redeemer and friend, commissioning us to join him in his ministry of loving compassion.

So interrupt, my friends. Change the order. Shift the routine. Attend to the sick and dying. Reach beyond the comfort zone. Befriend the stranger. Receive the one on the margins. Stay awake to God’s inbreaking presence.

Thanks be to God!, and Thank God for a decade of service with our brothers and sisters of the Jubilee neighborhood.