

Ordination of Matt Humphrey and Gail Rodger, Sept 20, 2020

The Rev. Bill Tartar, CFC

Good Bishop Logan, Dean Ansley, Archdeacons, Family, and Friends: beloved.

This last week Gail, Matt, and I spent a good deal of time talking about--- and learning how-- to see things differently and in transformative ways. We did this because there are many examples in the Gospels of how Jesus sees people a bit differently than those around him. Jesus looks at the Samaritan women and sees someone thirsty for living waters, not a foreigner unworthy to be acknowledged. Jesus sees the rich, young man and looks with love at him and offers an invitation to become more than just a man of empty wealth. Jesus sees the woman anointing his feet as a person in need of mercy and forgiveness, not a sinner and an unwanted intruder. All these people could be easily forgotten and remain unseen, but they weren't. Their lives are a part of the story of Jesus. The story says that when you are seen by Jesus, when you are loved by Jesus, and when we see Jesus, our lives change. We are transformed. Love does that.

Our gospel today tells the story of the tax collector who is seen by Jesus. The glance was so empowering, so deeply personal, that Matthew left his duties and followed Jesus. Tax collectors were not generally looked at in a kindly

fashion. They were seen as puppets of Imperial Rome and extortionists to their people. My guess is that more people spat at Matthew than took the time to see him for who he really was. Jesus made the effort to see him. Again, to be seen by Jesus and to see Jesus is to have your life changed.

This type of sight is an exchange, a connection, a communion between people. There is space that is created that allows love to blossom and become who we truly are. To be seen in love is deeply felt, especially if you have been unseen most of your life.

And what about the unseen in our world? They may be invisible because of their function: the store clerk, the garbage collector, the operating room nurse. Or maybe they are invisible because of their state in life: the homeless woman, the elderly, the unwanted child. Some people choose to be invisible because they have been hurt by others. Some are made invisible by society: the addict, the stranger with unusual dress and habits, those folks who just “aren’t our people.”

There are a lot of invisible people in our world. There are a lot of people who need to be seen with love and compassion. Perhaps you have felt invisible at

times in your life. I know I have, and at times, being invisible was the only way to survive. To be finally seen and loved is a stunning and transformative experience.

As an example: remember what it was like to fall in love. It all starts with a glance. That glance that sets us free from our insecurities and fears. That glance that created a space for courage and adventure. That glance that was the beginning of an unfolding of our lives. We are like the fearful flower bud that has burst wondrously into bloom. The world changed because we changed. And remember also, how you learned to unfold your beloved from their fears and insecurities? Remember how you learned to have mercy and to forgive? Remember how you learned to stand-by and stand-up for your beloved? All this comes from the look of love.

A loving gaze sets us free. This is how Jesus looks at people. Jesus sees with compassion and love. Perhaps the most tender gaze of Jesus is for those trapped in their hurt or sorrow. Jesus sees the invisible, the unwanted, the stranger. When Jesus sees someone he makes room in his life for that person and, more than likely that person makes room in their life for Jesus. When Jesus sees someone they are no longer a thing, or a function, or unwanted. They are loved.

Part of being a priest is the willingness to see people as Jesus sees them. Part of being a priest is to help people understand how deeply they have been seen by Jesus. Gail and Matthew, you will spend your priesthood following Jesus by seeing people with compassion and love. You will help people remember that God sees them, is for them, loves them and has invited all of us to be at dinner together. It is in that communion that we celebrate the love that is within us and transforms us.

Your priesthood needs to be expressed in every way possible that reminds us that they are seen and loved by Jesus. You are to remind people that they are invited to sit at table with God.

You know this, and you are willing to follow Jesus, because you have been seen and loved by Jesus. You are his beloved.

Remind us, again and again, of the Good News of Jesus: we are seen, we are God's beloved children.