

Sermon: January 11, 2009

“The Narthex”

In the creation story are these words:

*And God said --- “let there be light.” He called the light day ... and the darkness night.
He separated the two.*

We’re not just talking “day and night” here. We’re talking about the “light” shining deep inside your heart. LIGHT ----- it’s the spirit ... inspiring and enabling you and me to make a decision ... that doesn’t just benefit us ... but makes the world around us better.

There is a big difference between light and darkness ... and the difference lives inside each one of us.

I think of all the problems we are facing now ---- especially in our own state of Illinois. Underneath the bizarre stupidity of it all ... there is a sense of tragedy ... because many people are being hurt. Whether it’s the impeachment of our governor ... who should get the senate seat ... or the senseless gang shooting outside Dunbar High School ----- none of this would happen if people ... inside their hearts ... would choose LIGHT over DARKNESS.

When “crunch-time” comes ... when something has to be done ... when a decision needs to be made ... whether it’s the governor ... or our president-elect ... or Mr. Burris ... or Don Borling ... or some gang-banger cruising the streets near a high school ... or a mid-level employee in a small business ... WHEN YOU CHOOSE LIGHT OVER DARKNESS ... when you make a decision based on the common-good (and not just what’s best for you) ... then you are doing the Lord’s work.

I’ve been thinking a lot about the word “narthex” ----- the entry-way into our church. Let’s say you’ve been away from the church & religion for a while. So, you start visiting churches. You walk into this place called ALL SAINTS LUTHERAN CHURCH. The first room you enter is the “narthex” ... our entry-way. Do you feel welcome? ... like a stranger? ... do you want to come in further? ... or turn around and walk out the door? ... how does it feel?

Sometimes a visitor will walk in at 8:00 AM --- a bit early.

All this person sees is an empty room and me. They wonder. Well ----- when this happens ... I lead them into Charter Hall ... plopping them down next to Ed Janik and Wayne Heiser ... and I figure ----- if they can survive a half-hour with these 2 ... being “Lutheran” is no big deal@!!

Every place has a narthex. Gas stations, restaurants, a doctor’s office, your home ... even you and me ---- we have our own “narthex.” It may not be a physical narthex ... but when our eyes meet ... we send a message ... we give out energy ... am I a person of the “light” or am I a person of the “darkness”??

Life is a long-and-winding road. Once in a while, we need to get out of our “comfort zone” to appreciate the gifts we have. On this road ----- we see and experience the heights and depths of the human spirit. We discover places of “light” and places of “darkness.”

Two weeks ago ... the “long-and-winding-road” led us into northern Florida. We had gone far enough for the day ... it was time to find a room and get a bite to eat. We see a Red Lobster near the motel. Red Lobster is home of one of Quinton’s favorite narthexes ----- to entry-way with the fish tank ... full of live lobsters. Quinton loves talking to the lobsters ... and he is especially when there are kids standing around the tank --- more friends to talk to ... at least, in Q’s world.

Yet ----- something didn’t feel “right” in this “narthex.”

There are 3 or 4 families gathered in the entry-way ... waiting to be seated.

All the men and boys are wearing black suits and white shirts ... the ladies and girls are all in black dresses. Quinton kneels by the fish tank ... tries talking to the lobsters and talking to the other kids ...

when a young boy comes up front behind and kicks Q in the back!@!!
The kid turns around ... looks at Jude and myself ... knows we saw what he did ... and he gives us a look, as if
to say ---- “what are you going to do about it??”
The adults begin to squirm ... they see what happened ... and an “air of tension” fills this “narthex.”

Luckily we are seated rather quickly.

Our server ... ironically ... is a lady of color. I'm quiet ... but my bride Jude has the courage to ask
the question ---- “What is going on out there? ... who are these people???”
We find out --- these folks are the “in-towners.” They own the major businesses in town ----- i.e., notice the
fancy cars in the parking lot. They go to church on Sunday night ... and then to Red Lobster for dinner.

I'm thinking to myself:

“They go to church.”
Where they learn what? ... to kick someone who is different?
What's it like in their narthex?

Hopefully here ... in this humble place ...
in the places where you work and play and live everyday ...
Yes ---- we are taught: life is a “long-and-winding-road” ...

Along this road --- there is light, and there is darkness.
There is day, and there is night.

Along the way ---- we enter all kinds of narthexes.

May your narthex and mine ... always reflect the light ... God's light ...
the Lord's light.

As always ---- *the time for the light is NOW.*

Don Borling
All Saints Lutheran Church
13350 LaGrange Road
Orland Park, IL 60462
January 11, 2009
www.allsaintsjoy.com allsaintsjoy@sbcglobal.net 708-448-2939