

“If you do not see God in the other person, there’s no point looking any further.” Mahatma Gandhi

“It is not our differences that divide us. It is our inability to recognize, accept, and celebrate those differences.” Audre Lorde

Dear Friends,

We are in the midst of the Christmas Season. Yes, I know that “Christmas” was December 25th. I am talking about the *Season*. All twelve days of it (you remember the song....) ending on January 6th with the Feast of the Epiphany (often called *Little Christmas*). We however will end it with a *big* bang at the 10:00am service on January 7th with our Epiphany Pageant. Directed by Donna Devlin with a cast of many from all ages of our parish, it is not to be missed! A final Christmas gift to ourselves, if you will.

Which brings me back to Christmas. The great Feast of the Incarnation that we Anglicans so adore. I know that Mahatma Gandhi was no Anglican – but then again, perhaps he was and just did not know it! For he certainly could teach us a thing or two about how our Lord’s incarnation continues to penetrate our lives. Simply put? We find him in one another. And not just in the faces we see at church. We find him in the stranger. In the alien. In those who have a different faith from us. Or no faith at all. In those who look and sound quite different from us. And if we do not see God in the other person? Well, then, there’s no point looking any further.

I have been reflecting on that a lot lately. Our Parish Conversation Group (we haven’t come up with a better name for it yet) met again in December at the Rectory. Eleven parishioners came to further our dialogue about race in America and in our own lives. One participant brought in several books he has been recently reading, and I decided to give myself an early Christmas gift: My copy of ***When Affirmative Action Was White*** by Ira Katznelson arrived just a couple days ago and I plan to begin tackling it in the new year. I hope it will give me new eyes with which to see myself and the culture in which I was raised. For one thing our Conversation Group is helping me to do is to see life from other perspectives. I have loved listening to the thoughts of fellow parishioners and learning of their experiences. They sometimes seem so different from my own, but I am finding and making connections within my own experience. I believe it is making me a better Christian, and a better priest.

Recently those words of poet, writer and civil rights activist Audre Lorde leapt out at me from a page of a book I was reading, ***“It is not our differences that divide us. It is our inability to recognize, accept, and celebrate those differences.”*** What was strange about these words was that I did not find it in a book about discussing race or the civil rights movement. I found it in one I was reading for EFM (Education for Ministry) called ***Fighting with the Bible: Why Scripture Divides Us and How It Can Bring Us Together***. But there it was. It seems that this very human trait we have of identifying with one group and seeing our way as the only way (or at least, as the best way) was alive and well in the Biblical narrative – and continues to so easily divide Christians from one another.

I am glad we are talking. I hope you are, too. With your family, with your friends. Here at Christ Church. As a people who hold sacred the Incarnation, we are called to seek the Christ in every person. It is our sacred obligation to listen to one another and to make ourselves vulnerable – as vulnerable as a God who takes on flesh and becomes one of us – to come to know us just as we are.

In this new year, may we resolve together to listen to one another. To learn from each other. And to see the face of Christ in each and every person God brings our way.

Peace,
Mother Lisa+

PS: the next Parish Conversation Group is Tuesday, January 9, from 7:30 to 9:30 at the Rectory. Call me for more information.