

Dream Team?

I had not intended to watch the inauguration of Rahm Emanuel as mayor of Chicago. Not being a native-born Chicagoan, I must admit that local politics is not my favorite sport; in this, I am different from many, who follow it more passionately than they follow “da Bears”, “da Bulls”, “da Hawks”, “da Sox”, and the team the Northsiders lovingly refer to as “the Cubbies”. However, the inauguration was on as I went by the TV room of the priory, so I stuck my head in to see what all the fuss was about. On the screen, I saw an African-American minister from the South Side whose preaching might even wake up the congregations which our own preaching all too often puts to sleep, but I digress ... His rap rhythms had the place rocking! (Far be it from the ecumenical officer of the eparchy to suspect that the Holy Spirit might have chosen to work through a Protestant!) At the very end, he uttered what I find to be a memorable quote: “It takes teamwork to make the dream work!” (Was he talking about Chicago?!? Keep dreaming!!!) His words started me thinking. (You already know how dangerous that is, because I eventually end up sharing those thoughts with you. Be very afraid!)

What is our dream? I dare to say that our dream should be the same as Christ’s dream: the establishment, spread, and fulfillment of the Kingdom of God! The people of His time did not understand what Jesus and His Kingdom were all about. Do you remember how on Palm Sunday they wanted to crown Him their earthly King in the hope that He would wipe out their enemies? Of course, they turned on Him when they realized that He didn’t intend to live up to their unrealistic expectations, and they got Him crucified by the following Friday. Are we so different? As we clothe His icon with Ukrainian embroidery, so do we all too often clothe His Kingdom with our own selfish agendas and ambitions. After all, don’t we pray, “My will be done on earth as it is in heaven”? Perhaps I err ...

So what is Christ’s dream? It is summed up in the two great commandments: love the Lord your God with your whole self, and love your neighbor as yourself. (Matthew 22: 37-39; Mark 12: 30-31) I, of course, am reminded of a song – this time a very old one: “I give to you as you give to me: true love, true love!” Isn’t this exactly what Scripture tells us?

Beloved, let us love one another, because love is of God; everyone who loves is begotten by God and knows God. Whoever is without love does not know God, for God is love. In this way the love of God is revealed to us: God sent His only Son into the world so that we might have life through Him. In this is love: not that we have loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as expiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also must love one another. No one has ever seen God. Yet, if we love one another, God remains in us, and His love is brought to perfection in us. (1 John 4: 7-12)

That says it all. *Voilà!* The Kingdom of God is at hand.

So much for the dream ... As for the team, we’re it. I suspect that those who draft players for professional sports teams shake their heads in despair at the ones Jesus chooses for his team; after all, He does not seem to choose people on the basis of competence or performance. Look at the apostles: one sold Him for thirty pieces of silver, another denied Him, and all but one abandoned Him; not a very good track record! Then there’s us ... ‘nuff said! Somehow, in the unfathomable foolishness of the Divine Wisdom, Christ throws the likes of us together into the motley crew He calls a Church. When we come together as Church, He finds a way to make up for the all-too-evident weaknesses which we manifest, to imbue us with His own strength and wisdom.

Our society holds up cut-throat individualism as an ideal for us to emulate; for example, on the TV show “Survivor”, people exploit one another to achieve their own selfish goals. (Is this not also the way of politics? economics?) Christ, however, has a better idea: He transforms into His dream team those who are willing to be changed from self-seeking *prima donnas* to team players. As St. Paul tells the Corinthians,

There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but one Spirit; there are different forms of service but one Lord; there are different workings but the same God who produces them in everyone. To each individual the manifestation of the Spirit is given for some benefit ... one and the same Spirit produces all of these, distributing them to each person as He wishes. As a body is one though it has many parts, and all the parts of the body, though many, are one body, so also Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body ... If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it; if one part is honored, all the others share its joy. Now you are Christ's Body, and individually parts of it. (1 Cor. 12: 4-8, 11-13a, 26-7)

Sounds like teamwork to me! The Three Musketeers, the ultimate team, met any challenge with the cry: "One for all and all for one!" So, teammates, are you up to the challenge?

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