

Third Sunday in Ordinary Time
January 27, 2019

O most excellent Theophilus. Today we begin reading a letter between two friends. The letter is the Gospel of Luke written to his friend Theophilus. Theophilus is a Greek name which means ‘friend of God’. Actually, Theophilus is you. So Luke begins explaining that the story of Jesus has been told many times before but now he is going to tell it to you in an orderly sequence.

A letter to a friend or a letter from a friend is special indeed. Listen to these words from the book of Sirach:

“14 Faithful friends are a sturdy shelter;
whoever finds one finds a treasure.

15 Faithful friends are beyond price,
no amount can balance their worth.

16 Faithful friends are life-saving medicine;
those who fear God will find them.

17 Those who fear the Lord enjoy stable friendship,
for as they are, so will their neighbors be.

Curiously Luke skips over the story of Christmas. He cuts right to the chase. He begins with the beginning of the public life of Jesus. It happens in the Gospel today where Jesus comes back to his hometown. He has just changed the water into wine at the wedding feast of Cana. He is famous. Small-town boy makes good. And so here we have him getting up and reading from the book of Isaiah.

God is speaking to you as a friend. It’s not an email or a tweet. It is the personal voice of God speaking to you as a friend in the Gospel. He brings glad tidings to the poor, liberty to captives, sight to the blind, the oppressed go free and He proclaim liberty to all who are fallen down.

A good friend is like a cheerleader giving us hope and standing by us in good times and in bad. I am surrounded by good friends, good people in our

parishes. Every one of you is a unique voice from God. There is nobody like you and if you were not here, it would not be the same.

So Theophilus, friend of God, you are in good company. Take for example our servers. They always do so well. Each one brings their own personality to the Mass in a formal way. I tell them they are like soldiers guarding God. They stand tall and straight, wearing their uniform. They help to make the Mass more solemn. If the server is not here, we miss them and the Mass takes on a different personality. So it is with Father Menzel and Deacons Mark and Rick. Each week you get a different preacher. I have the deacons preach on the first and third Sundays of the month, and Father Bill celebrates one Mass each weekend at our parishes. So what you get is several people telling the same story. They bring their unique personality to the story. It is a healthy mix of viewpoints and approaches.

I've been thinking about changing out my presider's chair with a La-Z-Boy, replete with vibrator massage and heat and perhaps a cupholder.

I love to preach and I love to celebrate Mass. But O Theophilus, friend of God, it is good for you to hear the story told by other good friends. That brings us to the second reading which is that beautiful description of the church having many parts but is one body.

The children have a lively song that goes this way: All God's critters have a place in the choir. Some sing low and some sing higher, some sing loud on the telephone wire, some just clap their hands or paws or anything they got now." As you can tell the children do a much better job at this song than I do. I need a lot of help.

It is so good that you are here. Come in from the cold and sit down with good friends. Know that you are a good friend of God, most excellent Theophilus.