

CHRISTMAS DAY Year A (Homily 02)

“You Change the World”

(Isaiah 5:7-10; Psalm 98; Hebrews 1:1-6; John 1:1-18)

\*\*\*\*\*

The theme song for the Christopher Leadership Course Instructors’ Seminar in The Pas in November was *Today I’m Gonna Try to Change the World* by Johnny Reid. He sang it in Ottawa on Canada Day where it caught the attention of seminar leader Angie Mihalicz. She chose it as the theme song for the seminar. How the song was conceived is significant. Apparently one morning Johnny told his son, as he set out for school, to “go out and change the world. His son agreed and set out to do so. It suddenly struck Johnny how hypocritical he was telling his son to do that when he was not doing it himself. Reflecting on what he should be doing to change the world, he sat down and wrote the song.

Here are some of the words: *I’m gonna say hello to my neighbor; gonna greet him with a smile. Gonna shake the hand of a stranger, sit and talk for a while. Gonna tell someone that I love them from the bottom of my heart. Gonna make sure my children know right from wrong. Never turn my back on those who need someone. Always gonna try to see myself through another’s eyes. Today I’m gonna try and change the world.*

That song has a powerful message for us as we celebrate the birth of the one who truly did and continues to change the world, Jesus Christ. The readings today invite us to believe in Jesus and to be like Jesus. We are asked to believe in Jesus who is the Light of the world, and to light one candle ourselves, to spread the light of Christ to others.

Our first call is to put our faith in Jesus as Light of the World. He is the Word made flesh who is the Light that overcomes the darkness of the world that is so oppressive and touches us all. Who has not been affected by the violence, injustice, corruption, greed, addictions, lust and poverty that seems so rampant in our world, not to mention natural disasters and other atrocities. The recent massacre of Catholic Christians in Iraq during a celebration of the Eucharist is just one example of the darkness of this world.

There is only one, the Creator of all, the Giver of life who sustains everything, who can one day set everything right. That one is Jesus who is the grace, truth and glory of God. He is the forgiveness of God in person and the full revelation of the

Father's glory. To see what God is really like, we have only to come to experience Jesus in our lives.

That faith in Jesus calls for a strong response to follow him, to be like him, to become another Christ. The readings tell us that we have been given power to be like God. To be born of God really means to be forgiven, transformed, changed, in a sense, reborn, so that we are like Jesus ourselves.

Our mission is to repent, to receive his forgiveness, to be healed by him and in turn, to light up the darkness that is around us and make a difference in our world.

The Christopher Leadership Course that is taught in many parts of Canada as well as in our archdiocese is a good example of that mission. To be a Christopher is to be a Christ-bearer. The Christopher motto is "It is better to light one candle than curse the darkness." The Christopher's believe in the power of the individual to do good and to make a difference. They focus on helping people grow in confidence, learn effective communication skills and become empowered to serve their families and communities through a Christopher project.

The Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate recently held their General Chapter in Rome. The theme of that Chapter, and of the document emerging from that event, is on-going conversion. That too is the message of Christmas for us. Jesus has pitched his tent among us as the Light of the World, and now wants to make us bearers of his light to that same wounded world.

John Wesley expressed that call very succinctly in the following quote: "Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can."

The Eucharist that we celebrate now is light in our darkness, the love of God made present once again in a very humble and tangible way, this time through the gifts of bread and wine. They become the Body and Blood of Christ, and they transform us into his Body, his people, sent out to be light to the world.

So this Christmas day, let us deepen our faith in Jesus and become like him, seeking to truly bring light and hope to our wounded world.