

## **Sermon for January 15<sup>th</sup> 2017 John 1 29-42 Year A**

**In order to get a handle on where we are in John's gospel lesson this morning a little background information might be helpful. We are in the very first chapter of John. The chapter that begins with those familiar words – in the beginning was the word, and the word was with God and the Word was God. Through him all things were made. In him was life and that life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.**

**Then the gospel text introduces John the Baptist who the author says came as a witness to testify to this light, so that all might believe. John tells us that John the Baptist was not the light but came to testify to this new light that has arrived.**

**John the Baptist testifies about Jesus saying: "he who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me. From the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another. For the law was given through Moses: grace and truth came through Jesus Christ."**

**And just after all of this we get Today's gospel lesson, where Jesus this new light is walking toward John the Baptist and John declares – "here is the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world" and then he declares that Jesus is indeed the Son of God. The long awaited Messiah.**

**This gospel lesson is appropriate for the Season of the church year we have recently entered. The season of Christmas ended on January 6<sup>th</sup> and we are now into the season of Epiphany. The word Epiphany means, appearance or manifestation of something new.**

**Epiphany means to behold the world or one's life in a new way, with new eyes. It is when something becomes clear to us in a way we have never seen or noticed before. Epiphanies are identifying moments. New light is shed.**

**We all encounter epiphanies throughout our lives and this week one of those identifying epiphany moments happened to me.**

**I first heard of the article from a friend as we were having breakfast. When I got to my office that very morning a colleague had emailed me and said you must read this article that is called Grace Enough so I clicked on the link and I began to read.**

**The article, written by Jesuit priest, Brendan Busse, in the National Catholic Review, is about an interview with actor Andrew Garfield who will be playing the lead role as a Jesuit priest in the upcoming movie called Silence. ([www.americamagazine.org/issue/grace-enough](http://www.americamagazine.org/issue/grace-enough))**

**Garfield sought out the help of Jesuit priest James Martin about a year ago in order to get prepared to play the lead role – he sought Fr. Martin to lead him through the exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola so he would know more of the life of the priest he would be acting out on film. Garfield was not a man of faith – he said in the article that films were really his church. And boy did Garfield encounter an Epiphany – he new he would play a Jesuit in the movie Silence but he never expected to fall in love with Jesus.**

**As he put it: “What was really easy was falling in love with this person, was falling in love with Jesus Christ. That was the most surprising thing.” He went on to say “I felt so bad for Jesus and angry on his behalf when I finally did meet him, because... so many people have given him such a bad name and he has been used for so many dark things.”**

**The author of the article puts it like this: “Garfield falls in love with Jesus. He suffers with and for the beloved. And his compassionate suffering is given over in a vocation that intends to help others into love and out of its absence.”**

**And as I was reading on into the article there it was. These two sentences: “The experience of falling in love with Jesus was most surprising, perhaps, because Garfield, like many people, came to the exercises asking for something else. What he brought to the Exercises was not an explicit desire to know Christ but rather a painful and persistent sense of his own “not-enough-ness”.**

**There was the beginning of my epiphany.**

**That realization that that is what so many people in this world are looking for – a longing to be enough. A desire to shed that feeling of not-enough-ness. That fear of not being perfect enough – that wound of what I have to bring is never enough.**

**And then the real epiphany hit me like a ton of bricks, no, rather like a shining bright star, a new light shed in the darkness. God’s grace shown to this world through his incarnation in Jesus Christ is enough. God’s grace personified through the love of Jesus Christ is enough. God’s grace is enough. I don’t need to fear not being enough because God’s grace is enough for me.**

**At the end of the article, the writer had an epiphany of his own. He arrived back to his home in Madrid and he noticed as if for the first time, a paperweight that his father had given him a year ago. On it are big bold letters that say “I am enough” and as the author says, “this seems to be the grace that God had in mind for Andrew Garfield, the grace that all parents want for their children: that we might come to know ourselves as nothing more or less than the personification of their love. That this knowledge be enough. It is the final prayer Ignatius recommends in the Exercise: “Take everything God. Give me only your love and your grace. That is enough for me.”**

**During Epiphany we celebrate these identifying moments of grace and we also celebrate light in the darkness. We hear it in the story of the wise men being led by the shining star that is read on the feast of Epiphany. What a beautiful image that is. A light leading to the new light of the world.**

**We continue to hear of light throughout the readings during the season of Epiphany. Our collect for Epiphany 2 this morning reads “Almighty God who son our savior Jesus Christ is the light of the world; grant that your people being illumined by your word and sacraments may shine with the radiance of Christ’s glory.**

**John the Baptist came as a witness to testify to this light, the word made flesh whose life was the light of all people a light that shines in the darkness and darkness does not overcome it.**

**John the Baptist’s job was to point people to Jesus, the long awaited Messiah, the light in the darkness. Our job is to point to this light too.**

**All of this encourages us to reflect on our own epiphanies. Our own lights shining and what gifts we too can bring in order to bring the light of Christ to others.**

**What we can do to help others into love and out of its absence. To let people know that God's grace is enough? What we can do to get out of the way of ourselves and illuminate the Christ that is in each of us.**

**How can we present our gifts to the Christ child so that it is Christ in us that others see? What talents, interests, passions, might we see as gifts from God that we can now offer to Jesus by giving them to those all around us?**

**There are ways for everyone to make a difference- to be the light of Christ in this world that so desperately longs for that light. Mother Theresa said – if you can't feed a hundred people than feed just one. Each and every act of kindness, little or large, makes a difference –**

**So my friends go humbly, reverently, knowing god's grace is enough, calling people into love and out of its absence and letting the light of Christ shine through you in all that you do. Amen**