

The Congregation of Saint Athanasius
A sermon preached by Father Bradford on Sexagesima
February 4, 2018
+

The Gospel you just heard shows the Lord Jesus going about His business. And what is that business? God came to live with us so He could die for us. So when His friends suggested He should stay in one place and rest upon His laurels Jesus refused. Way back in *The Book of Judges* it was written: “The inhabitants of the villages in Israel shall rehearse the righteous acts of the Lord.” Jesus was determined to go to those villages.

Even in those early days of His ministry in Galilee however, Our Lord was planning His first mission to Jerusalem. After His baptism Jesus had been tempted in the wilderness. (That incident is always our Gospel at Mass on the First Sunday of Lent.) You remember at the time of the temptation Jesus had refused to present Himself in the Jerusalem Temple by a display of supernatural power. That power would have forced the allegiance of the nation to Him. Eventually Jerusalem would have to decide for or against the Lord. So to bring the people to the point of making a decision, Jesus first went to work in Galilee. He built up a following with a mysterious and beautiful sign of the character of His Gospel. This was the first miracle at the wedding in Cana of Galilee. Jesus turned water into wine. But it was no crowd-stunning performance! The Cana miracle was very much *unnoticed*. Only the steward, and perhaps Our Lady, had some idea of just what had happened. But the miracle set the tone for Our Lord’s ministry.

It has been said the Christian faith is “caught not taught.” Something is at work inside of us which convinces us Jesus is the Son of God. We learn to recognize this “something” is *Someone*: the Holy Ghost. You remember at one point Christ declaring to Simon Peter “Flesh and blood has not revealed [My divinity] to you.” It was not miracles or teaching *per se* but the inner workings of God Himself that erupted in Peter’s declaration “Thou art the Son of the Living God.”

All the proofs and arguments may be laid out. And it is important that they *be* laid out. Our witness to the faith that is in us lays the groundwork. And we are told to do it. But it is always the Holy Ghost Who provides an interior way of knowing. He is the One Who “connects the dots.”

The Congregation of Saint Athanasius
A sermon preached by Father Bradford on Sexagesima
February 4, 2018
+

There is the example of the Samaritan woman at the well. (You will hear about that in Lent as well.) After her conversation with the Lord she went and told the townspeople about Jesus. And she must have been an effective teacher, for we are told they all came out with her. But after having been with the Lord they told the woman “We no longer believe because of you but because we have seen for ourselves.” *Telling only goes so far.*

In our Gospel at Mass today Jesus is seen laying the groundwork for what will be revealed later. Jesus is seen taking care of thousands of souls to whom it was only revealed He was a prophet. He was not giving them an “I am God; take it or leave it” proposition! They were not ready for that. And those who have eyes to see and ears to hear will come to faith.

Giving witness to how we know faith can encourage others to go through the motions of Christian discipline and gradually come to an inner appreciation of where true life is to be found. But our declaration that “this is what works for me” cannot convince someone else who has not already become receptive to this kind of knowing. That is what is meant when people say Christian faith is “caught not taught.” Saint Paul was describing the way this happens when he declared “I planted, Apollos watered, but *God giveth the increase.*”