



Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany(C), 2019
The Rev. Dr. Christian Brocato, Rector

+May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable to you, O God, our Strength and Redeemer. Amen.

Today, I'd like us to consider a concept, perhaps, a theological construct entitled, 'Hyper Spiritual Consciousness'. Yes, that right's: 'Hyper Spiritual Consciousness'.

Recently, I saw an ad for a product with the tag line: "When I believe in something, I'm all in". "When I believe in something, I'm all in". (Preference by L'Oréal of Paris) It grabbed my attention so quickly that I immediately wanted to write it down, so as not to forget it.

Perhaps, the concept of 'Hyper Spiritual Consciousness' might mean that there is an inner awareness, a Christian awareness, of God's presence in us. That awareness can 'kick in' when we see such things as ads in print, online or on billboards. Such contemporary stimuli can connect the world around us with the spiritual world within us.

The New England Patriots and the Rams must certainly be thinking that if they didn't believe in winning the Super Bowl, they couldn't devote 100% of their attention to winning it. They believe. They are 'all in'.

If we at St. Mark's don't believe in what we do as the mission of God in this place, then, can we really expect to be "all in"? Can we realistically accomplish all we are called to accomplish as God's beloved community at St. Mark's?

For those of us who attended last week's Annual Meeting, I pray that we were inspired by the energy, the good food and the Report. The Report is a comprehensive 50+ page document. It chronicles our life together over the past year and sets the pace of our ministry for 2019. I believe the Report represents the ministries of the Parish as a fine example of what we believe. The finalized copy is on our website and hard copies are available on the Welcome Desk in the foyer.

"When we believe in something", then, we are "all in". Being "all in" means that we pay attention to as inner awareness that we were created by God and exist as God's creation. For us as Christians, we can be deeply aware of Christ's presence in our thoughts and in our actions through the power of the Spirit of God.

At Baptism, we are baptized into the Body of Christ and committed to Christ forever. Following Jesus flows from that commitment. So, what might that mean? What might that mean to us sitting here this morning, watching this message online on our website or on YouTube?

Every Sunday at worship, we hear four passages from Sacred Scripture. Every Sunday, we experience a oneness in our relationship with God when we receive the Body and Blood of Christ. Every Sunday, we rub shoulders with fellow Christians seeking to live as best we can as followers of Jesus. Every Sunday, the preached word challenges us to an awareness of what it means to be Christian in today's world. Our messages are not lofty preaching events. I hope that they are messages which help us to connect the dots between our religious tradition and daily life.

When we pay attention to things like ads, the news and to the needs of others, we can experience what it means to be in the world as Christians. What we do in the world, what we say and how we say it, can and does make a difference to us and those around us.

Being 'spiritually conscious' of God's presence just might give us an edge on how to be better people. Being "all in", just might give us an edge on how best to be Christians in daily life. Today, we find examples in the Scripture passages from Jeremiah, from Paul and from Luke of individuals who were 'all in' during their live times.

Paul's Letter to the Corinthians is a passage very often selected for weddings. I believe couples choose this passage because it is familiar and because they long to have 'love' in their married life which reflects Paul's message. Paul tell us that "Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth". That description of love is really a definition of perfect love... It not only reflects Paul's theology of love but the mind and will of God.

Often in my life, I wonder about 'the will of God'. Do you wonder, "How can we know the will of God?"

Perhaps, we might be assured that we can know the will of God when we are bearers of God's love, a love we experience in Jesus. His love for us through the Holy Spirit enables us to love as we are loved.

The will of God is that we believe that God "is with us", as Jeremiah reminds us. The will of God is that we believe that Jesus not only bore the love of God into the world but was a healing presence in the world. Jesus healed the sick and offered healing to those in need of forgiveness and reconciliation.

I believe that the world in which we live is in need of forgiveness and reconciliation. Some of us may have particular relationships in our lives in need of forgiveness and reconciliation.

I believe that the world is in need of Christians who are fully committed to being faithful to the Gospel and to be the best we can be for others. When our values are faithful to the Gospel, our lives mirror God's love, kindness and truth for a world so much in need.

How do we become bearers of God's love, kindness and truth? Is it not through believing and embracing Jesus, the love of God poured into creation? Is it not in the Eucharist which nourishes and sustains us in our relationship with God? When we are faithful followers of Jesus, we respond to God's call to relationship, and we can be changed.

A relationship with God in Jesus is the goal of the Christian life. Whatever obstacles stand in your way or in my way from realizing that goal need to be removed, so that God's grace can flourish in abundance.

I believe that it is God's will that we live lives of being conscious of Christ's presence and love in our daily lives. Let us fully embrace that consciousness, make it our own, and go forth in the Name of Christ, 'all in' and without reserve. Amen.