



SAINT LOUIS ABBEY



Father Michael Brunner
Headmaster's Welcome Back From Break
School Assembly, January 4, 2010

A reading from the first letter of St John (1 Jn 3:22–4:6)

Beloved:

We receive from him whatever we ask,
because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him.

And his commandment is this:

we should believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ,
and love one another just as he commanded us.

Those who keep his commandments remain in him, and he in them,
and the way we know that he remains in us
is from the Spirit whom he gave us.

Beloved, do not trust every spirit
but test the spirits to see whether they belong to God,
because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

This is how you can know the Spirit of God:
every spirit that acknowledges Jesus Christ come in the flesh belongs to God,
and every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus does not belong to God.

This is the spirit of the antichrist
who, as you heard, is to come,
but in fact is already in the world.

You belong to God, children, and you have conquered them,
for the one who is in you
is greater than the one who is in the world.

They belong to the world;
accordingly, their teaching belongs to the world,
and the world listens to them.

We belong to God, and anyone who knows God listens to us,
while anyone who does not belong to God refuses to hear us.

This is how we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of deceit.

The word of the Lord.

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Welcome back to Priory. I have missed you.

Today is the first school day of a new year, the year 2010. God, your teachers and I have prepared some great things for you this year, and some of those things no doubt will be surprises.



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Today is the Epiphany of the new year, a new decade in fact; it's first manifestation and expression as we get down to business.

Yesterday's Epiphany was of Jesus Christ, the day we celebrate his manifestation – or being made known to the world in three different ways:

First his recognition by the Magi, who stand for all the peoples of the world, and their offering to him of gifts;

Secondly we also remember his Baptism in the Jordan, when he was identified by John the Baptist as Messiah, when the Holy Spirit visibly descended upon Him and He heard the voice of the Father claiming Him as His son.

And finally we remember Jesus first miracle or sign of his power, at Cana, when he turned water into wine.

These three events you can relate to your own life, living as images of God, as other Christs, as human beings.

Your birth was awaited and expected with great anticipation. Your parents, their friends & relatives surely wondered... what will this child turn out to be? Surely your parents had dreams about you and for you. And when you were finally born into this world...no doubt a lot of people came to see you, to get a look at you, to admire you. And I'm sure many of them brought you gifts...not that you remember or had any more use for them than the baby Jesus had for gold, frankincense and myrrh.

Some of those who came to see you may have come a long way, on a journey somewhat like the Magi. The last time I spoke to you I talked about journeys. I vividly remember when my oldest brother's first child was born, how my mother & father, my other brother and I drove the 500 miles from Rochester to Norfolk, VA into what was then the segregated South just at the time of MLK's march on Washington. I was 13 and that was another journey that changed my life. Before you knew it or them, you too may have been a catalyst to changing people's lives, just as my nephew was.

At your baptism too, there were people present and you too received the Holy Spirit and were claimed by God as an adopted Son. You automatically received all the rights and privileges of full and blood sonship, the full inheritance earned by Jesus Christ, God, who fully became your brother.

Now the signs, miracles perhaps, attributable to you are or will be more subtle than Jesus' signs. But there are or will be signs of your mission, your greatness, your future. But these may be largely in your future. Jesus first sign did not appear until he was in his late 20's or so. So don't be discouraged, you are not overdue. Don't ever be discouraged.

There will be plenty of reasons to be discouraged if you choose to be. We are in a cold, tough, long part of the school year. We can all justify being discouraged, but that doesn't



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make being discouraged just or right. If there is anything we can learn from Jesus' life and His epiphany, it is not to be discouraged.

Think about it. Jesus was recognized and acknowledged by the Magi, and so Herod tried to kill him. His family had to run for their lives and wait for Herod to die before they could come home.

At Jesus' Baptism, all those crowds around John who saw and heard something special, at the very least they heard the Prophet John, who they thought might be the Messiah, tell them plainly... no this is the one, this guy I just baptized. He is the one all the prophets were talking about. Out of all those people watching and listening, only two sheepishly followed Jesus, nobody else. Well, one else. Satan noticed, followed Jesus into the desert and tempted him severely.

And after the miracle at Cana, did the bride and groom, the steward and cupbearers fall at Jesus feet and acknowledge him? Not at all. They just kept the party going. Thanks for the wine, Jesus.

And that was just the first of his miracles. After all those other public miracles, you'd think everyone would be convinced. But no, even Jesus knew that most people followed him hoping he'd do another loaves and fishes trick and feed their stomachs. And of course they eventually turned on him and crucified him.

Don't be discouraged then. To all things there is opposition. The epiphany, the first expression of something will, surely bring about opposition to it.

The best idea you ever come up with, someone will be right there to say you are stupid, wrong or evil.

Whether they are in your family, your classmates, your fraternity brother or co-worker, your brother in the monastery or whatever, they or someone will hang onto you in your life and tell anyone and everyone they can how wrong you are and oppose you, and work against you at every turn.

And if you believe them or let them deflect you from your goals, your mission you will accomplish nothing. Don't be discouraged.

The seniors are experiencing this right now. Somewhere, at some college, someone on an admission's committee is saying – No, he's not one we want.

Against all good people there is opposition. Against all saints there was opposition, people who were so certain they were doing God's will when they locked up John of the Cross, burned Joan of Arc, treated John Vianney like an imbecile. If you are going to be a protagonist in your life you will have antagonists. So don't be discouraged.



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Against Jesus there was such opposition. Can we – you and I – expect any different ?
Certainly not.

It's a new year, but the world we live in is not new. There is opposition to belief in God, opposition to belief in an afterlife, heaven or hell, opposition to religion and any moral choice. There is opposition to honesty and truth. If you are a good Christian, some people will hate you, even some Christians.
And Satan too will notice if you're trying to do good.

If Satan went after Jesus Christ, you and I are not going to scare him off. He's not some cartoon character with horns, a tail and a pitchfork. He's real and subtle. Our temptation can be a great opposition to our progress. Always remember that you will be tempted with things that are liable to succeed, and our own deepest, selfish desires can be those things.

When I was young and ambitious, I moved to NYC hoping to work at the Waldorf Astoria, then this country's finest hotel, but I went to work for a sister hotel instead. After five years, when I had finally realized just how bad New York was for me spiritually, just when I had made firm plans to leave, I was offered a great job at the Waldorf.

If you are a vegetarian, Satan will tempt you with vegetables, not meat.

Saint Paul tells us this morning, do not trust every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they belong to God. There is much falsehood abroad in the world. And that is Satan's first and most successful act, confusing truth with falsehood.

We've come off a ten day rest, I hope. We are ready to get down to business in a new year. We'll all face opposition, but we are ready, forewarned to be on our guard and we are not alone. We have each other and we have God with us; Again St. Paul tells us, We receive from him whatever we ask.

By standing and working with Him, with each other, by standing and working for truth and justice, we will overcome opposition and this will be for all of us a year of progress, a decade of growth in wisdom, age and grace.

Laus Tibi Domine. Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ.

Holy Father,

God of our yesterdays, our today, and our tomorrows.

We praise You for Your unequalled greatness.

Thank You for the year behind us and for the year ahead.

Help us in Your new year, Father, to worry less and laugh more.

To teach others to love by loving them.



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*Knowing, when Love came to the stable in Bethlehem, He came for us.
So that Love could be with us, and we could know You.
That we could share Love with others.
Help us to stop and listen to Your word and notice Your signs in our world,
so that we may know You better and better.
We rejoice in this world You loved into being.
Thank You for another new year and for new chances every day.
We pray for peace, for light, and for hope,
that we might spread them to others.
Forgive us for falling short this past year.
We leave the irreparable past in your hands,
and step out into the unknown new year knowing You will go with us.
We accept Your gift of a new year and we rejoice in what's ahead,
depending on You to help us do exactly what You want..
We rejoice in this New Year, in Jesus name. Amen.*