

8th Sunday of Ordinary Time C, March 3, 2019

There is an ancient Hindu story about a tiger born by accident among a herd of goats. The cub's mother died, and the goats took compassion on the little creature, raising it as their own. They nursed the tiger cub and taught it to speak their bleating language and nibble on the grass as if it had been born, like them, a vegetarian.

One night, after the tiger was almost fully grown, a fierce old tiger attacked and scattered the herd of goats. The young tiger, unafraid, stayed and looked curiously at the old beast. He uttered a few goat-like bleats and nibbled on nearby grass, until the old tiger roared: "What are you doing among this herd of goats, eating grass and making ridiculous sounds? Who do you think you are – a goat?"

Then the old tiger took the young one by the scruff of the neck to the edge of a pond and, kneeling beside him, forced him to look at his reflection on the moonlit surface of the water. "Look at those two faces!" roared the old tiger. "Now you know WHO you are and WHOSE you are!" And the old tiger took the young fellow off to his den, where he taught him to eat raw meat, hunt with excitement in his veins, and produce a terrible, glorious and triumphant roar.

If we want to know WHO we are and WHOSE we are, we must look into the waters of our baptism. There, mirrored in the waters with us, is the face of Jesus, the face of God. In those waters, Jesus tells us we belong to him – that his identity is stamped on us. As Paul reminds us, in those waters is the victory of Christ; we are called to a new life, exciting life, in Christ.

Tigers, to be true to their own identity, must act like tigers. Christians, to be true to our identity (Christ) must act like Christ. Sirach says that what a person speaks reveals what is in his/her heart. We are called to speak clearly who we are as followers of Christ.

Luke's Jesus tells us what it means to be real tigers, or followers of Christ. We are challenged to SEE CLEARLY, and follow the Christ with the help of each other...and not those who lead blindly. There are those who would like to lead us down the path of power, greed, possession, selfishness. We are to see clearly and SERVE.

We are to REMOVE THE PLANKS from our lives, the sinfulness that tempts us. Gossip has no place in the kingdom. We try to be our best as we follow Christ. We must first take a look at our own lives humbly and honestly. Then we can help each other along the way.

We must PRODUCE GOOD THINGS. How are our lives of service like Christ? In what ways have we helped others along the way? What do my words disclose about my mind and heart? Do I have the mind and heart of Christ?

The life of a goat seems simpler than that of a tiger. Easier perhaps. But the tiger in us is yearning to be set free. As we approach this Lenten season, let us keep our eyes on the water of our baptism. Soon the Easter waters will flow again, reminding us again WHO we are and to WHOSE family we belong. Let us remember that and ROAR ALLELUIA!