

Vision of Our Faith Journey

Envisioning the Reign of God in Our Midst

Fr. Hung Nguyen

St. Nicholas Parish, Gig Harbor WA

“Seek first the kingdom of God and everything else will be given to you,” said Jesus. This invitation of Jesus is our command. This is what our Lord has in mind at all times and in all places. Jesus nurtures and carries this message with Him whether He is by Himself or with others, whether He is in His private moments or in public ministry, whether He is on the mountain or in the synagogue, whether He is born or crucified, whether He is with the woman at the well or with His disciples at the table. He did all things for the reign of God whether healing the sick, forgiving the sinner, raising the dead, teaching the people, or performing a miracle. The reign of God is the first proclamation He makes when He finishes His 40 days in the desert and enters His public ministry; “The time of fulfillment is now. The reign of God is at hand. Repent, and return to the Gospel.”

On the heel of Jesus’ invitation, I wonder if we could provide a response to this utmost call. “How are we going to seek God’s reign first in our faith journey?” is the enterprise at stake? I think we can begin by envisioning what God’s reign looks like in our midst. Vision is the connection between the divine mystery and our daily life. It provides a compass to navigate on the right path. They are pillars where we can hang our efforts, unfolding God’s kingdom. They are Spirituality, Vocation, The Day of the Lord, and Evangelization.

Spirituality: *We are spiritual beings. Coming to terms with this core of our beings is essential. It is a call to return to our root and live at that level. We begin to live at the level of the Spirit once we recognize the essence of our existence. This is how we come to know that we are spiritual. God is Spirit and He gives birth to us. Who God is, there we are. Since God is Spirit, therefore we are spirit. Since God is the invisible being and eternal existence who gives shape and form to all things and beings, therefore we are spiritual beings living out our life in this world in this embodied person. That is why the Church teaches us to be spiritual. We are called to be holy. Holiness is the universal call for us all. It is not a call of a particular person or unique situation. It is for everyone because it is everywhere. Holiness is the work of the Holy Spirit and our collaboration. His task is to purify and sanctify us or to make our days holy. Live like the Spirit and we are free from shape and form, past and future, flesh and baggage, program and condition. At the same time our spiritual capacity will lift material shape and form into the movement of the Spirit. Once we live from our spiritual capacity and level, the reign of God is at hand and holiness is now.*

Vocation: *We are called. We are called into this life. We are called to live this life. And when we have completed it we are called to eternal life. We are called by virtue of our existence. We are born for a divine purpose. A life driven by this purpose is ultimately a fulfilling one, a holy one. Therefore, vocation is our way of life and our way of life is vocational. Every longing and pursuit we have reflects our yearning for a purposeful and meaningful life journey. In this journey, we come to know the One who gives birth to our being and makes our being complete. The Church recognizes this universal calling and classifies it into 3 primary states of life: marriage, priesthood and religious life, and single. Whatever state of life we choose must have the inherent divine calling in it first. First, our saying “yes” to a family life is not just a “yes” to each other as a couple, but first of all it is our “yes” to God to espouse this way of life according to His will. When this happens we make God the center of our union, and our family a holy community. Second, our saying*

“yes” to priesthood and religious life is not just a noble idea that we are committed to, but above all it is our “yes” to God to embrace His plan for God’s people. When this happens we remember our life is consecrated for God alone, and our service is God’s loving care for others. Third, our saying “yes” to a single life is not just our choice, but also God’s decision for us to live this way in its unique witness. When this happens we know God is our faithful companion in our life journey and Lord in all our actions. In a final analysis, all that we are, all that we have, and all that we do are meant for the greatest glory of God.

The Lord’s Day: *“One day with the Lord is worth a thousand days else where.” The psalmists remind us that significant moments we have set aside to be with God. Our day with the Lord is so significant that in the beginning of time, God let us know that among the seven days of the creation cycle, the Day of the Lord is the center of all. It is the day of rest where we reset ourselves, refresh our lives, and celebrate its fruit. The Lord’s Day is our day with the Most High where our very existence and labors are recognized and harvested to the fullest. The Lord’s Day is on the first day of our weekly journey because we mark our journey with the first day of the Lord’s Resurrection and the birth of the Church by the coming of the Holy Spirit. The Church centers her living days with the celebration of the Eucharist which is the summit and source of all Christian journeys. It is the beginning and end on which all things hinge. It is where we are called to gather as one body of the faithful and sent forth as agent of the Good News. When we plan our schedule around the Lord’s Day, and the Lord’s plan is around our days. What we do on the weekdays is to prepare for what is coming on Sunday. What we do on Sunday is to inspire what happens on weekdays. Those days together are one seamless garment of eternity and heavenly expression of God’s presence that is fully celebrated on the Lord’s Day.*

Evangelization: *Those who come to worship God are to be sent to His mission. God has chosen us to be His own so others can be chosen. God saves us so others can be saved. God has called us so others can be called. In other words, we are loved so others can be loved. We become disciples of Christ so others can become disciples. That is the spirit of evangelization. We do not become Christians just for ourselves but for others to come to know Christ. We are the salt of the earth and the light of the world for we have been salted and lightened by Christ. The very nature of the Church is mission. It is God’s mission that brings God’s people into the existence for the last 2000 years. We are instruments of God in every sense. The life-giving Spirit we received at Pentecost becomes alive as we pass it on to others. For our own salvation we are to be saving channels for others. Bring one person back to God and the church today. Turn our home and our parish into mission station. And we are completing the cycle of salvation. Otherwise the life giving and saving Spirit we received will come to a stop because it has come to a dead end. There is no outlet for its continuation of recreating the face of the earth. We are missionaries by virtue of being God’s children. We have been commissioned.*

Conclusion:

It is on these 4 pillars of our parish vision that we can hang our spirit and effort around. I invite you to envision your own faith journey. I encourage you to make your own vision known to your family and community. I hope this will start your process of personal discernment with God and our parish. Let us dream God’s dream and see what God sees. It is time to take that first step in a life giving direction that leads us all the way to our first Love. Make our entire faith journey an instance of holiness and an occasion of grace.