

Sermon :: 06-Apr-2025 Lent 5, Year C

Children's message

- **[Gather at FONT, not Altar]**
- Today we're going to do something a little funny for church: Talk about our *noses!*
- What do we *do* with our noses? ...
- What are some of the things we *smell* with our noses? ...
- What is the *most wonderful thing* you've ever smelled with your nose?
- I brought along w/me today one of the things I think smells the most wonderful in the whole world: **[Share chrism¹ ... dab one on each hand]**
- At HB, we're clean(s)ed in the water ... and then "sealed" or "marked" on our foreheads, by the H/S, with this beautiful-smelling chrism
- And we do all this because when we're baptized ... Jesus is doing SOMETHING NEW in us ... something wonderful and fresh and loving ... Jesus is taking us as his own—making us His sister or brother ... and loving us with all His heart: *forgiving* all our sins and setting a *place for us in heaven*, where we will join Him, forever, when, one day, we die
- So, this beautiful smelling chrism is a sign ... a reminder ... a **promise** ... of the new and wonderful thing Jesus does for us when we get baptized ...
- ... For JC is always creating new ways for us to love Him ... new ways for us to love our family, friends and neighbors ... and new ways for us to love the whole world ...
- ... And the beautiful smell of this chrism is a reminder of all these wonderful ways that are always all around us ... if we'll just remember to open our noses and smell them!! Can you remember to try to use your noses to sniff for Jesus and His NEW THINGS?!?
- **[Dismiss]**

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" I am about to do a NEW THING;
now it springs forth; do you not perceive it? "

What *is* the smell of a wonderful *NEW THING*?

[8:00 only :: Provide a summary / 'preview' of children's message – the smell of the 'NEW THING' of baptism – will put some on my hands so you can smell at Communion]

Today's lessons are all about the *NEW THINGS* God is constantly doing *for* us ... and *in* us ... and *with* us. ¶In Isaiah, God tells Israel ... *part* of the people *captive*—in exile, in Babylon; and *another* part *isolated*—lonely, back in Israel ... that God is about to do a *NEW THING* ... which is about to spring forth: that just as God parted the Red Sea for them to escape the Egyptians ... so, too, will God make a *new* path for them ... to flourish, once more, in God's providence. ¶In Paul's letter to the Philippians, he tells them of the wonderful *NEW THING*—the "new goal"; the "prize of the heavenly call"—that he is now **pressing on** to lay hold of ... because Christ has laid hold of *him*, through faith. ¶And although it may be more difficult to **see** ... the *NEW THING* that Mary—the sister of Martha and Lazarus—is doing ... **smells** so wonderful ... that it fills the entire house with the fragrance of **sweetest** perfume. For Mary is one of the first—perhaps even *the* first—to understand the

¹ From the ancient Greek for anointing.

highest and holiest character of the sacrifice Jesus is about to make upon the Cross: to grasp the magnitude of God's willingly laying aside God's *infinite* ... to die our very-*finite*, very-human *death*. The self-sacrifice of *God* ... for the salvation of *sinners*: the '*NEWest*' THING this world has ever witnessed ... and the *last* '*NEW THING*' it will ever need. And so, Mary symbolically anoints Jesus' body **as** for burial: with a *most wonderful fragrance* to mark the death of a hero ... a liberator ... of **the** Messiah² ... and a most beloved friend.

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What is the smell of a wonderful *NEW THING*?

It hasn't escaped the notice of anyone in this room, I am *positive*, that we are now in new times, in this nation and in this world: in our politics ... in our government ... in our relationships, person-to-person ... party-to-party ... group-to-group ... country-to-country. ¶Certainties we've lived with for decades ... are now question marks. ¶New ways that, even just a year or two ago, seemed as distant as Mars ... are taking shape before our eyes. ¶Sentiments that we'd always been taught were impolite or impolitic—uncharitable or unchristian—to say ... now grace our airwaves³ ... scroll across our screens ... and fall freely from our neighbors' lips—and **just** maybe, even from our *own*.

And as Mary signals by flooding the house with sweet smell as she anoints Jesus' feet ... new *times* call for *NEW THINGS*. So, I've been thinking ... *a lot* ... *a very lot* ... of late, about what *NEW THINGS All Souls'* is being called to, by the new *times* that we now found ourselves living in.

One *NEW THING* I am doing ... is doubling down on something I think is fundamental—*foundational*—for *every* rector of *every* parish: Keeping the people of the parish—*all* the people ... the *entire* flock ... the *Body* of Christ ... united and whole, in the love of Christ and generosity of the Holy Spirit. I believe with every **fiber of my faith** and **passion of my priesthood** that it's *essential* ... *unquestionable* ... *not up for debate* ... that a parish ... in times of great social strife and division ... in days of partisan loathing and individual vilification ... remain one *cohesive* ... **mutually respecting** ... and **all-loving** body.

You told me during the call process ... and I've learned over the last two-plus years ... that, collectively, we hold opinions, take positions and vote our franchise all *across* the political spectrum. While you, no doubt, have discerned at least some of my *own* politics from my preaching, teaching and private conversations ... and I know that not *all* of you agree with *everything* I say ... you have my **ironclad pledge** that I will never do ... or allow to be done ... here, any *NEW THING* ... that threatens to split us apart. Yes, over time, we may, inevitably, lose a *few* on the *margins*, because it really *isn't* possible to please everyone, all the time ... and we will miss and mourn them if they should go. But I personally will do *all I can* to ensure the center of *All Souls'* holds ... and that we remain together: not only because this is the patient, forbearing love Jesus enjoins us to show one another ... but also because, in these times, the Church *must* teach ... *must* model ... *must, in fact, be* ... Jesus' love, **to and for** the world around us.

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² *I.e.*, Anointed One.

³ Metaphorically, of course. I know we're a wired nation now!

And ... what *else*? What *other* NEW THINGS are we being called to, as a parish, in these new times?

Over the last two months, various of you have suggested that ... in an effort to proclaim our faith ... teach Jesus' ethics ... undo unjust acts ... call out attitudes and behaviors that **de-dignify** others ... || ... we pray ... discuss ... study ... teach ... debate ... write letters ... take positions ... make confession ... advocate ... advertise ... demonstrate ... protest.

And ... I am cognizant that, sitting in these pews [**10:15** and **online**], **is** too wide a gamut of positions for us to *all* agree ... *readily* ... on *many* of the most vexing issues of our times.

And so ... I'd like to call us, as a parish, into a season of discernment: of prayerful and thoughtful consideration ... of what new THING or THINGS Jesus may be calling us to do, as the people—*all* the people—of All Souls', in these new times:

- Are we being called to communicate ... to advertise ... even to *boast* a little ... to the wider community, the sheer breadth of political opinions that *peacefully* and *lovingly* **co-habit** here ... and actively engage and **invite in** *others* who may be looking for the same WELCOME and PEACE?
- Are we being called to a time of learning, sharing and converging? Should we take up a topic or an issue, to explore and discuss ... together—*all* together—both respectfully and charitably ... and see what common ground—what *NEW THING*, in Jesus—the Holy Spirit develops among us?
- Are we being called to take action ... *united* action ... to assist others who've suffered adverse consequences in these new times? People who have lost jobs or funding for their work? People who, for one reason or another, now fear **their** future?
> Are we being called to take action ... *public* action ... to help those who have *long* been at the margins of society ... in order to demonstrate, tangibly, that *regardless* of the political merry-go-round in Washington ... Christ's people *always* seek and serve Him in *all* persons: loving our neighbors as ourselves, exactly as we promised at our baptisms?

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I'll admit: I don't *know* what NEW THINGS we, as All Souls' Episcopal Church, are being **called to**, in this new time, both **unsettled** and **unsettling**. And so, I'm calling on us to ponder ... to pray ... to discuss ... even to *dream*, a little. ¶If you already *have* an idea, write it down on **this slip** that's at the end of each pew, and put it in the plate or hand it to me on your way out; and if you'd like to discuss it with me, please put your name on it. ¶**And** I invite us—*all* of us—**also** to *ponder ... pray ... discuss*: amongst yourselves ... with me, with the wardens, with our vestry members. Let's put our hearts and our heads together about what wonderful NEW THINGS All Souls' is being called to, in this time ... to share with the world ... the *fragrance* of *Christ*.

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