

Sermon of 2nd Sunday after Christmas  
St. Joseph Parish

January 5, 2025  
Fr. Plimpton

God's plans for His people...God's overarching plan is mankind's salvation. Baptism assures us that never changes nor will ever change. Our baptisms are specific events in time whose significance the Holy Ghost unfolds through life to reveal what is God's specific plan.. in Christ..for each of us. We are all climbing salvation mountain..to the top where our Lord is waiting for us..at least, when He is not willingly and lovingly letting Himself down..to rescue us..to help us regain our footing.

Were the scope and breadth of Salvation to be revealed we could not bear the joy of it now..The breadth and scope of this ongoing event of saving his creatures and turning their lives around is too broad and leaves us too breathless to fully appreciate as a generality.. It takes specific little "earthy" salvations to anticipate how great is the heavenly joy that awaits us.. It takes sins forgiven and restitutions made. As Isaiah reminded us a few minutes ago, it takes broken hearts being bound up. It takes being rescued from the innumerable foxholes we create for ourselves, the dead ends, and the despairs of loss to appreciate in just these smallest instances, how grand and limitless must be God's overarching plan for man's Salvation..

These specific homespun events are the steps God intends for the the working out of our salvation. And in prayer, it takes recollecting the little missteps we've taken and the grievous leaps we once took to find happiness...and how Jesus the Good Shepherd put us over His shoulders guided us to back to the path He intends for us to take up the mountain. In

faith, can you **extrapolate from** the specific little saving events in your life and imagine the overarching plan of Salvation!

From Matthew's gospel of this morning God's specific plan is revealed: to preserve the lives of the Holy Family so as to keep His overarching plan, to bring man's Savior, into this world..for the world. The specifics needed? ... God gave them. They came in a sequence of life changes: The Holy Family had to flee from Herod, leaving their home in Judea for their lives. Second, the specific plan was to settle in Egypt for a spell. Then, the specific plan was for the family to return to Judaea.. but to keep step with the grand plan of salvation in which not only Jesus but Mary and Joseph were to play ongoing parts in our lives, that was to change.

Therefore, on a specific night as he slept on the journey homeward, Joseph had a dream so God could preserve their lives. The plan now called for a change of course from Judea to Galilee. We can experience the specific events of the Holy Family as saving events of our own because we recognize behind them the overarching plan of God's salvation in Jesus which the church has taught us and continues to teach us.

On the road to Damascus, Saul was following what he thought was God's specific plan for him as a loyal devout Jew..to put down the Christians there. What happened on the road to Damascus was a salvific event bringing a total turnaround in the specifics of Saul's life. To signal how critical Saul's specific salvation was to be for God's overarching plan of salvation, God gave him a new name..he became a new person named Paul. Old Saul was saved from himself! The persecutor became the apostle . Now Paul was to play a specific part DEAR to God and His overarching plan of salvation by preaching the Gospel to gentiles.

The profligate young Augustine was saved from himself.. from the specific life path he was taking toward “happiness”, but in God’s reality, into dissolution. Augustine came to himself hearing the Christ whom St. Ambrose bore him in his sermons...becoming a saint who helps so many of us up the mountain of salvation by his example in the Confessions. The same kind of salvific change in the specifics in his life happened to the once dedicated soldier St. Ignatius after he had lain recovering from a cannonball wound. One night as he was reading scripture within a cave, God took Ignatius away from earthy war and into His own army..again to serve God’s overarching purpose of spreading the good news of Jesus Christ to the world and saving men.. and St. Ignatius left us a another helpful guide up the mountain in his Spiritual Exercises!

Before the 12 days of Christmas are ended, let’s take time to see just how all the specific plans we had for 2024 unfolded in the end... Compare the endings during the year to the specifics with which we began 2024. Notice a huge difference? Why is that? Was God involved? Did we stop to appreciate and give thanks for God’s hand in the specifics of choices and decisions which we had made but which He guided us to alter so as to preserve our lives and dig deeper into our faith in Him? Did our specific plans match with what we know to be God’s overarching plan of salvation and with what God expects of each of us as individuals and as a church? Could it be we were we so caught up in our own specifics lives that we did not heed a specific message to change course- even if it meant only a slight modification in our specific plans for the day ..a change that might have brought an afternoon of renewed hope to another’s life.

If we haven't a clue, could it be were we so distracted from God that we didn't even hear His specific guiding whisper? For all of us here this morning, that's behind us now..we are human, we have the courage to recall how we learned the lessons, we are striving to learn all God's truths in those lessons, and God's grace has brought us here.

I am hoping that for each of us as we enter 2025, we become daily aware of the little saving events that take place around us.. often coming unwittingly from our own hands into the hands of others. Not only to observe and appreciate them as belonging to the grand plan of God's, but making them our own occasions for joy as his disciples. For having found our hearts stirred in some moment by His grace to do, it will be in the specific little saving events like forgiving and self offering that we find ourselves doing Christ's work on earth.. for the sake of others.

We are all climbing the same mountain to meet our Maker..with the lifelines of His saving grace let down the mountain path's steep climbs and the footsteps of the saints to follow through the thickets. Among other labors of love we take upon ourselves, it is the small steps of looking daily to Him to take charge of our specific live events, by looking to Him on the Cross..and looking to contribute to Christ's saving work in others that bring us ultimately to the mountain top.