

Fr. John Sassani
Homily Given January 27, 2008
Third Sunday in Ordinary Time - Liturgical Year A

In some ways, most of us could be meteorologists. We can't interpret atmospheric pressure, but we can interpret the atmosphere – the feeling – and speculate about the climate, the human atmosphere. You walk into a household and feel the peace, or you walk into a household and feel the tension. If the household atmosphere is good, you feel it; if it isn't, you feel it.

We have several households represented in the Sacred Scripture we hear proclaimed today. Jesus has moved from Nazareth to Capernaum. Here, he met the sons of Zebedee – James and John – and Peter and Andrew. There is no atmosphere to interpret here except this: the two pairs of brothers seem to be working well together. The atmosphere of the Zebedee home may have changed when James and John left their father alone to mend the nets when they followed Jesus.

The second reading is a bit different. The Christians in Corinth met in the households of some of its members, and there was some division within and among them. Paul has heard that the atmosphere is bad, and he wants to address it. There are factions: rich and poor, theological opinions, various personalities. Paul urges them to be united, as brothers and sisters. The word used here for “united” means *putting things back together that have been separated*, like mending a net.

The Church has a certain unity, though much more is needed to be sure. We have just concluded the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, an observance that's been going on for 100 years this year. Here in the Archdiocese, parishes are still keeping vigil to stay open, Catholics are alienated because of the sex abuse crisis, and parishes are closing. And of course, there were the troubles here at Our Lady's two years ago. The atmosphere seems normal now, but there may be deep resentments, ongoing hurts, and hidden – or, at times, not-so-hidden – rifts.

When the atmosphere is bad in our households, none of us wait too long to clear the air. In the Church, it should be the same. The net for being fishers of men and women is nothing other than us. People are caught for Christ by communities that are Christlike. If the net of the Church needs mending, people will not get caught. Christ is the fisher of men and women; we are the net. Christ mends us by the Eucharist – the family meal that makes us one in Him to change us.

The bread and the wine are easily changed by the power of God; the bread and the wine have no will to resist. But *our* will allows or prevents the changing that Christ seeks. As we gather for the Eucharist today, let's allow the Word helps soften our will and deepen our desire for the change that the Eucharist seeks to accomplish – that we should **be** the Body of Christ, changing the atmosphere of the world into the Kingdom of Heaven.