

The Epiphany January 6, 2008

Readings: Isaiah 60:1-6,9; Psalm 72:1-2, 10-17; Ephesians 3:1-12;
Matthew 2:1-12

IBM has an ad on TV. Mr. Inspiration is addressing the gathered employees. Like an Army Drill Sergeant, he screams into the face of one young man, "Are you fired up?" They all yell the phrases "Are you fired up?" and "Yes, I'm fired up!" "What are you fired up about?" The young man answers, "I don't know!" Then the tag line rolls --- If you're ready for action, call IBM.

I want to tell you, I've been ordained since 1975. I was fired up at that time to learn how to be a Parish Priest. I learned a lot and in 1987, I left Parish ministry because, in my humble estimation, the Episcopal churches I knew were gazing at their navels. The organizing principle was 'we got it, and you don't. We can't explain it, but we have it'. The message was as subtle as a hurricane. One rector I worked for pointed out a newcomer and said, "Will, I want that person to join this church --- make it happen." Another time, I was told to do all I could to discourage a family from joining. They were going to take and not give, he said.

He was the only person I came close to hitting with my right fist since I left the army. By the way, the unworthy family is still there --- not the favored one or the Rector!

That was then.

This is now.

I'm fired up! Look at us. When the Bishop was here, he said we are one of the most diverse churches in the Diocese of North Carolina. There are three. We are number 2 and very close to number 1.

Folks will say, "You can't have that sense of family with so much diversity". I never want a sense of family, anyway. I've got one family and that's crazy enough for me.

For God's sake, our reason for being is not to be a family. Our inheritance is much more glorious and radical and exciting. We are the living the Body of Christ. We are a new creation. Our allegiance is way beyond family.

When the shepherds came to the manger, they were so fired up. They shouted "Glory to God in the Highest!" When the Wise Men found the Babe, they were overwhelmed with joy.

What am I fired up about? More and more of us are clear about our inheritance as children of God. I'm fired up because our 8:00 and 10:30 worship services

have a sense of informality as well as meaningful liturgy. We provide the best opportunity to act on our first baptismal covenant --- we will continue in the Apostle's teaching and fellowship in the breaking of bread and in the prayers.

I'm fired up again about the Episcopal Church and our church.

As Episcopalians, we have a pastoral responsibility to every member. And we, unlike the family, have a responsibility to the least of these. The further the person is from our center, the higher the emphasis is for us to reach out.

The star we follow does not lead to exclusive clubs --- rather to the one in the ditch, the woman at the well, the lost sheep, the prisoner, the widow and the orphan and the hungry.

I'm fired up about a proposal I'll give to the Vestry on Saturday at our day long retreat. I propose that each one of us put one can of food in a bag each day and bring the seven cans to Sunday services. We will weigh the food each Sunday and on Easter, we will celebrate the 3 tons given. We will all help feed hungry people we will never know. They will not be left in the ditch.

I'm fired up about Jen Bourne and our youth ministry. In our youth ministry, we are able to adapt, capable of flexibility. We will provide for who we are with all the great resources we have.

I'm fired up about our Vestry and our church.

In church lingo, we are a pastoral-size church. This means we have enough energy to minister among ourselves and reach out to others. I'm fired up about Joanne Jenkins who is a board member with Mecklenburg Ministries. I'll meet with Mecklenburg Ministries.

I'll meet with Tom Tate at Plaza Presbyterian to ponder Shepherd's Center East. George Linko is on their board.

Flo Trevor is a faithful member of St. Andrews and a loyal volunteer at Thompson's Family Focus. Teenie Tully not only nurses us with coffee, she volunteers at the hospital many hours each week.

There are many of you that give in so many ways to whatever is good. We have much to be fired up about.

If you have been frozen for awhile; if the church turned you off too; if, like the Wise Men, you would like to take another road, let's ponder.

When we don't get fired up, we may slip into business as usual. Our hero, our leader, our Lord was not about business as usual.

The one with authority is the servant.
The last will be first.
The meek shall inherit the earth.

May the light of Epiphany help direct us to a mission that gets us fired up. May the star we have all seen, the very star we carry with us now, may it warm the most incredible allegiance we have to consume our inheritance and be the living presence of God.

We can begin with our communion.

We can begin with one can of food each day.

We Episcopalians aren't supposed to get too fired up, so in our Episcopal ways, let us be fired us, as member of St. Andrews.