

Well, good afternoon.

There's something quite remarkable and beautifully round about what we're doing today. Not only are we going to dedicate a frontal in remembrance of the first bishop of this diocese, a work designed by James Hubbell, but this morning the people of Good Samaritan prayed and remembered the bishop who bought the land they built on and commissioned the windows that grace their sanctuary, windows also designed by Hubbell. Today Good Sam is a thriving congregation building bridges with students at UCSD and with all sorts and conditions of neighbors.

Bishop Wolterstorff might be spinning in his grave at Good Sam's female rector and even more at the idea that a woman bishop was there to confirm this morning. Yet, somehow I imagine that heaven has already healed that difficulty. God is always cooking up surprises. Mary was not exactly looking for an early pregnancy. Elizabeth was so old that all she could do was laugh at that idea. Bishop Wolterstorff helped to transform the Bishop's School from girls boarding to a co-ed day school. James Hubbell rebuilt and re-energized his creativity after fire destroyed his home and studio. God's faithful people respond to the challenges that emerge with words like Mary's: "Here I am, your servant. Let it be and let's get on with it". That's not simply rolling over and letting the latest growth opportunity unfold. It's about full-fledged partnership. I'll do my part, offer my passion and keep hoping and striving toward a new and lively result.

Even tragedy and error can yield radically new life. Charles Colson was Nixon's evil genius in the Watergate Affair in 1974. He went to prison for obstructing justice and came out a changed man who started changing the world. He set up prison fellowship ministries to bring Christian support to inmates, and he advocated for criminal justice reform and more humane prisons. In 1993, he was awarded the Templeton Prize for Progress in Religion. If that's not a story of rebirth and new life, I don't know what is.

The will to engage a crisis or opportunity is what faithful relationship is all about. Think about the wedding vows that we hear: To have and to hold from this day forward. For better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health. To love and to cherish until we are parted by death. They clearly mean I'll keep showing up no matter what happens and trust in the love that

endures through all the changes and chances of this life. The promises we make at baptism use a lot more words, but the focus is the same. I will keep practicing and engaging opportunities to love God and love my neighbors as myself. And whenever I wander off the track, I'll make a u-turn. I trust that there will always be another opportunity in this moment that is even now emerging.

The way of Jesus is a persistent journey toward recognizing and entering the heart of God, where we know that we are loved and share that boundless love with others. Awareness of that love and confidence in it is key. We often miss the gift or the possibility in an encounter when we're frustrated or angry or dismayed. Mary says yes to a social death sentence, yet she exalts in the possibilities. "My soul magnifies the Lord, for he has noticed his humble servant". The mighty one has magnified me. Magnify here means something like showing the world or even publishing glad tidings. It's not about physical growth, but spreading the news of a glorious reality. Like a magnifying glass, it lets us see and learn about the very small or humble. Mary's magnifying says God notices the little ones and God loves me. God has chosen to lift up this poor soul whom the world will ridicule and ostracize.

The wonder of an open heart changes lives and changes the world. Look at how the people of Christ Church have come together to pray, to comfort the grieving, to insist that evil will not win and to stand together in solidarity. When one of the survivors publicly lamented his failure to go back and assist others after he found his wife and child alive and scurried away with them, he was affirming the possibilities of an open heart. The love of God has no bounds, all are God's children in spite of our differences. Would that we might see those differences as blessing, for the myriad diversity God created is just one aspect of the ever unfolding divine creative newness. With practice we can more often decide to notice and appreciate and even bless that difference and newness rather than shunning the other who shows us another aspect of God's own image.

God is eternally invested in the business of surprises and new approaches, even when we doggedly resist, or outright refuse them. We name as saints those who seek to live in concert with the emerging symphony of new life. A 15th century monk said, "Man proposes and God disposes". The language is antique, but he was pointing to the human predilection for making plans

even as God is already working something new and unexpected. Thomas a' Kempis, that monk, actually wrote something a little more complex. He said, "For the resolutions of the just depend on the grace of God, rather than on their own wisdom. And in God they always put their trust whatever they take in hand. For man proposes but God disposes and human beings never make the way by their own hands". The faithful cooperate with God's grace confident that the future is radically open and God is still making the way before us. The just, the righteous, those who respond to godly invitations trust that God is doing something new and discover that new and more abundant life rolling out into the future that we call the Reign of God.

What godly newness is calling you? What invitation is luring into the future? Like the re-imagining and renewal that took place in this sanctuary when Father Bob was the rector, the frontal we're going to dedicate today is another invitation to see God's emerging creation in images that might awaken us to God's eternal newness. I will invite you to look and see what images you discover. Sea and surf, flowers, thoughts of seals and whales, maybe even surfers, maybe an invitation to make new friends at the coffee shop or the soup kitchen. Look lively and lean into the new possibility that God lovingly offers. God is luring us into a future of unbounded love. Magnify the God of Love.