

We celebrate tonight with word and deed, with song and ceremony, the power present God who claims us all as we proclaim in prayer, in sacrament and sign, a “Bold New Vision.”

“A Bold New Vision” - our bishop’s voice did declared it, saying - “People of Resurrection, you have reflected on your ministry, chosen a new rector, and discerned a bold new vision for your parish.”

Oh, yes you have. You’ve done this and more. Like all too many guided by the Holy Wind, sustained by the Divine Breath, pursued by the Relentless Storm of Love, you’ve done so much more than you discerned. And in so doing this and more you, like all the saints before, will suffer now the hate and spears of those that doubt your victory. Still “Bold New Vision” you proclaim – and bold it is, arrogant to an outside eye, - what you do and claim and be in this fleeting holy moment.

A “Bold New Vision,” the doubters sneer, “Such Bold and New is doomed to fail in our sick-sin world, consumed by self and greed and need and more. Give-up, go home, surrender to and live as us, contented, self-surviving, small. How dare you puny ‘piscopal parish turn deaf ears to the world’s wisdom and choose discipleship where leadership ought to be. You choose discipleship when instead throughout the world charismatic savior-leaders offer answers to all needs and will give you what you want in gratifying easy nuggets.

“Surrender boldness, deny the vision new” – doubt cries – “You will fail, bold and new always do. Attention spans don’t last today, your lack is vast, the void is deep that you must fill with courage, commitment, fortitude, and peace, and all the hardest things you’ll need before so bold a path you’ll walk as discipleship, indeed.”

Turning from Doubt’s chiding tongue, offering the other cheek, holy wisdom begins to speak, from you and her and God’s incarnate wisdom – ringing, bringing clearest contrast with the ruler-leaders of our day. Discipleship is not our own, it’s not our fad or bright idea, it’s not unique to our church. Discipleship is Bold New Vision true AND more – Bold New Vision

grounded in Abiding Love. New and ancient of God’s harvest-kingdom, always planting, planting new the timeless seeds of Abiding Love in new hearts each generation. Disciple-living, becoming, being full-headed grain, sprouted grown. Harvest ready, ripe in faith, Discipleship is Bold New Vision building, growing freely in its season now, undeterred by doubt and living unimpeded by any voice save God’s alone. Discipleship as Bold New Vision grounded in Abiding Love will not fail.

In quick dismiss-reply Doubt thrusts discipleship aside and pounds again against our minds “Fine” and “Bah” and “Be disciples of whoever! No matter. For failure of your Bold New Vision is certain-sure when in addition you’re so absurd as to believe that all people matter, and all have claim to justice, dignity, respect, and love. Imago Dei – blasphemy in pop-cultures’ temple! What’s more you heretics of modern-values preach in Bold New Vision claiming not just with lips and words and speech but with open arms and doors and *GASP* with sacred-dollar sacrifices to proclaim that ALL bear the image/mark/imprint of God and so should thrive in shelter-home with food enough to eat.”

“Imago Me and Mine is all that matters at this hour, in this world where race and class and creed and more divide and bleed! Look deep,” Doubt accuses each, “Fear and hatred, ignorance reside in everyone, even you. Rooted systemic-strong in farthest reaches far beyond the light of divine reflection that you claim for the people of this place.”

Turning from Doubt’s sharp rebuke, offering the other cheek, holy wisdom does still speak, from you and her and Jesus’ incarnate wisdom now - ringing, brining clearest contrast with the sages of our day. Imago Dei is who we are created - how we’re woven warp and weave. Imago Dei can’t be exclusive to one color, one profession-occupation, one denomination or one nation. Imago Dei is Bold New Vision’s smallest seed, planted in and by Abiding Love to become the greatest mustard-shrub, now springing, growing, greening, reaching-forth in branches giving shady homes for all God’s children. Imago Dei as Bold New Vision living in Abiding Love will not fail.

“Sure, whatever. Claim the ‘others’ of the earth for your very own, but never will you be but what you’ve always been – an end to short history of church. You cannot be remade renewed. There is no life for you beyond this day. The church, your church, all church is dying. Please rest in peace, end your age, accept the story of who you were. You tried and failed. No harm in daring greatly-briefly but it’s over now. No matter who you follow-lead, no matter what you see in self or others’ mirrors, Church is dead, in that believe.

And then into this, Doubt’s final testament, its highest wall, its deepest doom, holy wisdom in finality speaks – yours and hers and Spirit/Ghost’s incarnate wisdom – ringing, bringing, shouting, singing, breathing clearest contrast-declaration of creation, reality-defining shaping, shattering all myth, the passing of the church. God’s church, this church, Christ’s bride adorned in splendor lives in forever-celebration not of death but RESSURECTION. Not birth to grave, but birth and life and death and new. Risking all you hold of identity and self. Tearing down these walls and building once again on sure foundation. You will remake, surrender, trust, believe and walk and into resurrection life find anew a Bold New Vision sustained unfailing, living, spreading, changing, brining glory honor splendor to and from our God to you, thriving in Abiding Love. Declare with your life now ending now beginning Resurrection - Bold New Vision authored in Abiding Love shall not fail.

Then end we now this proclamation. You- Resurrection, You-Rector Jo, You Church of Christ will not, cannot, shall not fail – you have already won. And so declare with all your being - “We who live Christ’s Resurrection, we have reflected God’s creation, Imago Dei, in our mission-ministry. We’ve chosen one disciple-partner-rector, and have discerned a Bold New Vision, grounded-living-in and authored by Abiding Love. Our victory is certain.” AMEN.