

## **Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany Sunday, January 31, 2021**

**The Collect:** Almighty and everlasting God, you govern all things both in heaven and on earth: Mercifully hear the supplications of your people, and in our time grant us your peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

### **Old Testament: Deuteronomy 18:15-20 read from the New Living Translation Bible**

15 Moses continued, “The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your fellow Israelites. You must listen to him. 16 For this is what you yourselves requested of the Lord your God when you were assembled at Mount Sinai. You said, ‘Don’t let us hear the voice of the Lord our God anymore or see this blazing fire, for we will die.’

17 “Then the Lord said to me, ‘What they have said is right. 18 I will raise up a prophet like you from among their fellow Israelites. I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell the people everything I command him. 19 I will personally deal with anyone who will not listen to the messages the prophet proclaims on my behalf. 20 But any prophet who falsely claims to speak in my name or who speaks in the name of another god must die.’

### **Hear what the spirit is telling God's people**

### **Psalm 111 read from The Episcopal Church Book of Common Prayer**

1 Hallelujah!

I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart, \*  
in the assembly of the upright, in the congregation.

2 Great are the deeds of the Lord! \*

they are studied by all who delight in them.

3 His work is full of majesty and splendor, \*

and his righteousness endures for ever.

4 He makes his marvelous works to be remembered; \*

the Lord is gracious and full of compassion.

5 He gives food to those who fear him; \*

he is ever mindful of his covenant.

6 He has shown his people the power of his works \*  
in giving them the lands of the nations.

7 The works of his hands are faithfulness and justice; \*  
all his commandments are sure.

8 They stand fast for ever and ever, \*  
because they are done in truth and equity.

9 He sent redemption to his people;  
he commanded his covenant for ever; \*  
holy and awesome is his Name.

10 The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; \*  
those who act accordingly have a good understanding;  
his praise endures for ever.

**Epistle: 1 Corinthians 8:1-13 read from the New Revised Standard Version Bible**

8 Now concerning food sacrificed to idols: we know that “all of us possess knowledge.” Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. 2 Anyone who claims to know something does not yet have the necessary knowledge; 3 but anyone who loves God is known by him.

4 Hence, as to the eating of food offered to idols, we know that “no idol in the world really exists,” and that “there is no God but one.” 5 Indeed, even though there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth—as in fact there are many gods and many lords— 6 yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.

7 It is not everyone, however, who has this knowledge. Since some have become so accustomed to idols until now, they still think of the food they eat as food offered to an idol; and their conscience, being weak, is defiled. 8 “Food will not bring us close to God.” We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do. 9 But take care that this liberty of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. 10 For if others see you, who possess knowledge, eating in the temple of an idol, might they not, since their

conscience is weak, be encouraged to the point of eating food sacrificed to idols? 11 So by your knowledge those weak believers for whom Christ died are destroyed. 12 But when you thus sin against members of your family, and wound their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. 13 Therefore, if food is a cause of their falling, I will never eat meat, so that I may not cause one of them to fall.

### **Hear what the spirit is saying to God's people**

#### **Gospel: Mark 1:21-28 New Revised Standard Version Bible Anglicized**

21 They went to Capernaum; and when the sabbath came, he entered the synagogue and taught. 22 They were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. 23 Just then there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit, 24 and he cried out, 'What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God.' 25 But Jesus rebuked him, saying, 'Be silent, and come out of him!' 26 And the unclean spirit, throwing him into convulsions and crying with a loud voice, came out of him. 27 They were all amazed, and they kept on asking one another, 'What is this? A new teaching—with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him.' 28 At once his fame began to spread throughout the surrounding region of Galilee.

#### **Closing Prayer: On February 4 we celebrate the life of Anskar, Archbishop of Hamburg, Missionary to Denmark and Sweden. Read from *A Great Cloud of Witnesses*.**

Anskar (Latinized as Ansgarius) was one of those valiant Christians of whom it might be said, "These shall plant the seed, but others shall reap the harvest." As Archbishop of Hamburg, he was papal legate for missionary work among the Scandinavians. The immediate result of his devoted and perilous labors was slight: two churches established on the border of Denmark and one priest settled in Sweden. He also participated in the consecration of Gotbert, first bishop in Sweden.

Anskar was born in the Somme region of France in 801, and educated in the outstanding

monastic school near Corbie. His teaching skill led him to be chosen to be sent out by Corbie as master of a new monastery school, in Saxon Germany. His strongest call, however, was to be a missionary.

He was stirred, his biographer Rimbert says, by a prolonged vision, in which a voice said, "Go and return to me crowned with martyrdom." When King Harald of Denmark sought missionaries for that country in 826, Anskar was one of those selected. Rimbert notes that Anskar's missionary purpose caused astonishment. Why should he wish to leave his brothers to deal with "unknown and barbarous folk"? Some of the brethren tried to deter him; others mocked him.

Steadfast in his resolve, Anskar established a school and mission in Denmark, working conscientiously but unsuccessfully to convert and evangelize. He was not totally discouraged. Another vision appeared, with a voice saying, "Go and declare the work of God to the nations." Shortly afterward (about 829), he was called to Sweden and eagerly accepted. Meager aid both from the monastery and the emperor frustrated his efforts.

While still a young man, Anskar was consecrated Archbishop of Hamburg in 831, and continued his work among the Scandinavians until 848, when he retired to the See of Bremen and died in 865. The seeds of his efforts were not to bear fruit until over one hundred years later, when Viking devastation, weakness in the Frankish Church, and the lowest ebb of missionary enthusiasm came to an end. The rich harvest of conversion was three generations away. Nevertheless, Anskar is looked upon by Scandinavians as their apostle.

**Let us pray.** Almighty and everlasting God, who sent your servant Anskar to sow the seeds of faith among the people of Scandinavia: Keep your Church from discouragement in the day of small things, knowing that when you have begun a good work you will bring it to a fruitful conclusion; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**