

## *Sunday after Theophany Matthew 4:12-17*



*"At that time, when Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew into Galilee; and leaving Nazareth he went and dwelt in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, that what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: "The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, toward the sea, across the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles, the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death light has dawned."*

On Friday, the gospel of this Sunday was read in 6 or 7 languages. Jacob made sure there was a translation for those whose mother language was not English. That helped, for instance, a volunteer from Iran to connect with the gospel in a personal way. John being put in prison reminded her of the people who are silenced in Iran today, being sent to prison or silenced on the streets. She remembered and she connected with the gospel in tears, just like many other volunteers from Iran during the week. There was power at the time of John, and there is power today that looks to silence people. And there is this feeling that nobody can oppose it. However, on Friday we concluded that even when everything seems to be lost, when the voice of the prophet is silenced in prison or killed on the streets, that is the time when God appears and works within the community. That is the time when Jesus starts to preach. When John, the only one who preached the good news, who pointed to the Truth, was silenced, the time when everything seemed to be lost, was the time when Christ was acting. However, he is not seen because the incarnate Word acts at the margins, before He reaches the center.



The power that silences Jesus is contributing to the fulfilment of the prophecy. Jesus does not take the threat lightly. And he does not go to Jerusalem to protest against those who arrested John. Just like, at times, we still think we can do this today: we try to change the heart of the king or rather find a king who is going to protect the innocents

and bring about justice. Christ is justice. He is the righteousness. And he acts. However, he acts at the very margins. Where He goes, there is nothing more marginal than Galilee but the sea (so He can first encounter the refugees who look for a place where war does not reign). Galilee is not only marginal geographically, it is also the place where foreigners gather. It is outside of the law, outside of the camp (see today's epistle reading), among the people who are forgotten in darkness and who have nobody. The Galilee of the gentiles is the place where Jesus is coming today: at the margins, where immigrants and refugees, of different ethnicities and cultures, are gathered. Some of them have recently arrived and they are asking for a status.

It was with them that Jesus breaks the silence of the incarnate Word. Among them he preaches. He heals and he casts out demons. He eats with the sinners and the broken hearted. Because the kingdom of heaven is at hand. He is the joy for those who are crying and the food for those who are hungry. He is the justice, the love that heals the soul of any abuse experienced by the poor heart. He restores the dignity of the humiliated through His humility, which humanity has not experienced before within itself. That opens a new door within the soul so we can meet Christ and each other with a joyful quick step, "leaping for joy". The gospel reveals to us the way in which the violence is opposed and conquered, by becoming mercy at the margins.

A volunteer noticed on Friday that Jesus uttered the same words as John the Baptist. In fact, most of the reflection focused on the relationship between John and Jesus. And how the time of Jesus speaking coincides with John's decreasing influence. It was Fernando who spoke more about John the Baptist, about how he always points to Christ, even from his mother's womb. Before being born he "leaps for joy" when he encounters Jesus. All his life, John beheld Christ, never betraying the joy he had experienced before being born. And Jesus is using the same words first, as a testimony to the truth that John uttered. John prepared His way until the very end, even through imprisonment and death, being subjected to an execution by the power that can release or crucify. Like Jesus, John was loved by the people and rejected by the authorities who executed him. Christ acts first at the margins by becoming mercy and food for the hungry and he conquers violence through the cross when He takes the last trip to Jerusalem. He goes from the margins to the center. He becomes what people are looking for and what they need: food for the hungry who live at the margins, and an innocent lamb for those at the center. He is crucified in order for all the nation not to perish.

At Theophany, Christ enters the waters of the Jordan in humility. He is burdened by its destructive stream, the flow of life, changing completely its dynamic and its course; from death to life. He enters in humility. The way in which a change is made. It is the opposite of what we hear and see with our eyes today, where power is projected as the way in which things are changed and peace brought to earth. If this power is the result of the egocentric movement of the human heart, that leads to control, destruction and death, the humility of the servant leads, in exchange, to encounter and to communal life. It leads to a new creation, a new community that embraces all, that nurtures and gives life, caring for those who are wounded, as it cares for its own soul.

The movement starts as in the gospel, at the margins where life, as broken as it is, has hope and never rejects the love that heals. The margins are the place where the apostles are gathered and follow Jesus. It is the place of birth of the new community, where the church can become what it is. The movement is towards the center, where at the given time, it will confront violence with love and truth. At the time when the church has fully learned to forgive and to love those who persecute the poor.

What happens within the community applies to our own heart as well. At Theophany, Christ descends into the abyss of our heart, “challenging” our existence with His humility. But first He acts at the margins, healing the wounds of our body and soul, becoming sanctified water for our everlasting thirst. He feeds and nurtures us as he fed the people in the wilderness. He does so before descending within our very core, at the proper time. That is the place which is still resistant to him. The place that has been protecting itself from His love. We think that the Sun of Righteousness shines within us from the center, innundating our whole being. The gospel tells us that it shows first at the margins, making his way to the center. And we’ll know, at the proper time, if our heart has been ultimately conquered. When we become ourselves food for the hungry and mercy for the broken hearted. Not yet fully healed but completely conquered by Him, we’ll know that when we start to love the enemies and leap for joy when Christ approaches. We’ll know that nothing in us is resistant to Him anymore. Because we have become a part of the body of Christ.

### **Community:**

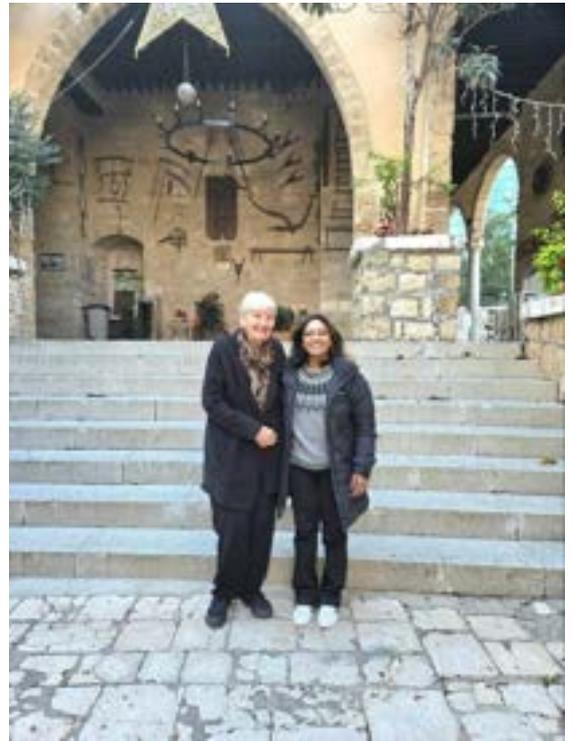
Warren, our friend who lives at Lourmel House, who helps every morning at breakfast, and who just recently spent a few days with us at the refuge for Christmas, just found

out this morning that his mother died unexpectedly back home in Zambia. Her name is Miriam. **Memory Eternal to Miriam!** Please pray for Miriam's soul and also keep Warren in your prayers.

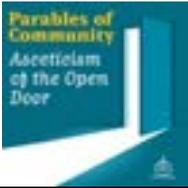
**Linda**, who is now in her 80s, reminded us again this week the way she started to volunteer at St John's. The discussion started from a story in the newsletter. She remembered how she took the newsletter to her church this year and shared with all, including her pastor. And they were all moved and gathered donations for Christmas. And after she reminded again her story about volunteering: she wanted to volunteer and she applied to a different organization that lost her application. It took a long time. She knew she wanted to volunteer. She received this desire as a call addressed to a woman in her 80's who lives with a terminal illness. So she did not give up. She prayed and she asked God for a sign, so that she may know where to go and volunteer. And then one day, as she was riding the streetcar, she saw the electrical board sign in front of the mission. And she was trying every time to read the quotes on the board, "until it hit me: I was asking for a sign and there it was, on the sign board. That's when I understood. I looked for the mission and I called, at the time, sister Penka, saying that I wanted to volunteer. And she told me to come as soon as I could. And I came. That's how I started. And you know, the first time I came in, I felt this joy that completely embraced me. I have never felt that before. Here, in the church. And I've been coming since then. So, if you need a sign, ask for one. He will give a sign, you just have to follow through". Linda has told us this story before. It seemed appropriate to record it this time since she felt the need to say it again, to remember that our God is a God who works wonders and gives a sign, when a sign is prayed for, in order for the hungry to be fed and for the broken hearted to be comforted. Linda answers the phone every Friday at the mission. If you call and hear her voice, you'll know how that voice is heard at the mission.

"Thank you for the gifts."

Mary Padma with  
Agnes in Haifa,  
at the House of Grace.



The chapel at the House of Grace



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We are an apostolate of the ecumenical patriarchate "Mother Church of Christ's poor" under the Omophorion of Metropolitan Gregory of Nyssa

St. Silouan Chapel, January 11, 2026

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