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## *Salvation, Glory, and His-story*

**A sermon by the Rev. Ricardo Bailey**  
**Epiphany 5 – Year B**

My sisters and brothers in Christ,

I am so thankful to be here this morning because when I celebrate my last Mass today, I am not going to go home. I am not going to watch basketball. This afternoon, I have a date! And, get ready Canon Maxwell and all of my esteemed clergy members ... it is NOT with Mrs. Bailey!

I have a date planned to go to the movies with our Cathedral youth group! (You all thought I was trippin' for a moment, huh?) Yes, your kids, Rebecca our Director of Youth and Emerging Adult Ministries, and yours truly, will be enjoying an afternoon at the movies as we all go together to watch the motion picture, *Selma*.

Personally, I believe that this will be money well spent because this movie tells the story about a time in our nation's history when some people lost sight of the power, relevance, and impact of God on the intended character of what our nation said it was to be on paper. At times, we must be reminded of the past – not to make us feel guilty, but so that history can serve as a compass of the direction we need to go!

I hope that we all listened attentively to the proclamation of God's Word from the book of the prophet Isaiah: If the Word passed you by, please let me read it to you one more time!

Have you not known? Have you not heard?  
Has it not been told you from the beginning?  
Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth?  
*The LORD is the everlasting God,  
the Creator of the ends of the earth.  
He does not faint or grow weary;  
He gives power to the faint,  
and strengthens the powerless.  
... those who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength,  
they shall mount up with wings like eagles,  
they shall run and not be weary,  
they shall walk and not faint.*

In his book, *The Life of Reason* (1905), George Santayana wrote “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.” Ultimately, popular society have played with this phrase and made Santayana's use of the word “past” to be used with the word “history.” Thus we know the phrase better when it is said in this format: “Those who cannot remember history as condemned to repeat it.” So, since Father Bailey is playing his version of “Holy Family Feud,” lets play with the meaning of the word “history!”

I promise that this will not be an English lesson but a simple play on words. For me, and I would submit for so many others, the meaning of the word “history” is that someone else wrote the story. I am the reader and I am being told about events from the eye, mind, and hand of the writer.

But, we are at church, right? So, may I submit for us that the word “history” could mean for us “HIS STORY!” That would mean that everything that is done and that is experienced is part of the story of God! In the Judeo-Christian mind, this would make sense, because, this is the way that God reveals himself to us! After all, didn’t Isaiah make it clear to all of us when he asked,

*Have you not known? Have you not heard?  
Has it not been told you from the beginning?*

The way that God has made himself known to us is that he is the God of freedom! He is the God of salvation! He is the God who is known to us in and through Jesus the Christ! I pray that as the young members of our Cathedral parish watch the movie *Selma*, that their hearts and minds will be opened to the power of God and the rich potential that we all have as his Church.

The story that God shares with us, is a story that at times is not so pleasant to see and even to hear. But, as a faithful and faith-filled people we know that the story isn’t over. The story did not end at the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama – it began with people saying and singing, “Ain’t Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Around.” The story did not end in Montgomery, Alabama – it began with the conversion of a former Governor who once said, “...Segregation forever!”

Therefore, I ask you again Cathedral family:

*Have you not known? Have you not heard?  
Has it not been told you from the beginning?*

My sisters and brothers, God has a plan for us and I would submit to you that His plan is for us to get with the program! “What program?” you may ask. HIS PROGRAM!

I am glad that we are finished with the year 2014, but I will not forget “Snowpocalypse,” all of the hurt, the pain, the killing, the riots – no, I will not forget any of the things that happened last year because I know that those experiences and events serve to prepare us for the glory that is to come and the grace that will certainly sustain us.

My friends, let's call a spade a spade. Racism is a sin. Sexism is a sin. Anything that separates or places on the backburner the God-given potential that any human being has to be loved, respected, and protected is not of God! We all in one form or another must examine our consciences and confess before God and testify to one another that at times we have been on the wrong side of “HIS-story!” In many ways by the misuse of the free-will that God Almighty has bequeathed to you and to me, we have not been the best stewards of the opportunities that God has given us to “incarnate” his grace into the lives of others.

Now, do not think that this is the end! I love being a Christian and as a fellow-worker in this salvific enterprise, I want to see you in heaven as much as I hope that you would like to see me there too! The good news today is that God’s story – yes, HIS-story – is being written in our hearts and is being revealed every day that we have the privilege to wake up! So, as baptized believers and pilgrims who are fed with the real “soul food” – the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist: we must know that everyone, yes, everyone in front of you, everyone behind you, everyone beside you – matter! There is a purpose and there is a plan for all of us.

I’m thankful each and every day that I stand with all of you on this holy ground. Let’s pray together and forever that the story that God has graciously included us in will truly come to fruition and that from his love and from the example of our lives, we can raise more prophetic voices like those of our Cathedral youth who will hear these words when the movie ends:

*Selma's now for every man, woman and child  
Even Jesus got his crown in front of a crowd  
They marched with the torch, we gon' run with it now  
Never look back, we done gone hundreds of miles  
From dark roads he rose, to become a hero  
Facin' the league of justice, his power was the people  
Enemy is lethal, a king became regal*

*Saw the face of Jim Crow under a bald eagle*  
*The biggest weapon is to stay peaceful!*  
*We sing, our music is the cuts that we bleed through!*  
*Somewhere in the dream we had an epiphany!*  
*Now we right the wrongs in history!*

*No one can win the war individually*  
*It takes the wisdom of the elders*  
*and young people's energy*  
*Welcome to the story we call victory*  
*Comin' of the Lord, my eyes have seen the glory!*

*One day, when the glory comes!*  
*It will be ours, it will be ours*  
*Oh, one day, when the war is won*  
*We will be sure,*  
*we will be sure!*  
*Oh, glory, glory*  
*Oh, glory, glory glory!*  
<http://www.directlyrics.com/john-legend-glory-lyrics.html>

*“Set us free, O God, from the bondage of our sins, and give us the liberty of that abundant life...”*  
*(BCP – Collect, Fifth Sunday After the Epiphany, Rite II)*

Let the Church say, AMEN!