

SERMONS FROM ST. FRANCIS

Ordination of Dawn Roginski

June 16, 2007 –

Text: Luke 8:42b-48, 9:1-6

Pr. Donna Simon

A couple of months ago, I was listening to a call-in show on NPR about the outrageous cost of weddings these days. A guy called in to say that yes, the costs had spiraled out of control. He was so appalled that one day he decided to become ordained, so that he could help his friends out by conducting their weddings.

"It was easy," he said. "I did it online. Took about two minutes."

It's true. I looked it up. You can get ordained online in a couple of minutes. For free. Though if you want to be a Doctor of Divinity, it's \$29.99.

There *are* some pretty rigorous instructions. I copied a few, in case any of you are thinking *you* might like to get ordained tonight.

- Please only ordain others with their permission. This includes public figures as well as cartoon and other fictional characters.
- Please only put your true and legal name. Nicknames will invalidate your ordination.
- Please use only factual information in this serious religious rite.

The "serious religious rite" consists of entering your name and address and hitting "send." And that's it. You're ordained!

So Dawn...That is your true and legal name, isn't it?

How long were you in seminary? And how long have you been waiting for a call?

Got some student loans to pay back now?

Didn't you know you could just go online? You could've just gone online, filled out the form—pardon me, engaged in the "serious religious rite"—and started calling yourself "pastor." It's easy. Easier than seminary. Easier than paying back the money it cost you to go to seminary. No hassles. No candidacy committees. **Free and easy.**

And, of course, that's the problem with a quickie online ordination, isn't it?

It isn't *supposed* to be easy to become a minister in Christ's church. In fact, it should be sort of hard. It should take more than two minutes, and you should probably be able to demonstrate more acute skills than the ability to recite your own address.

A pastor should be able to preach. And teach. And clean a church bathroom without complaining, and run a good committee meeting, and whip up a devotion in twenty seconds or less. And offer the prayer before every potluck and community event from now until you die. That part is very important.

Those skills can't be assessed online. Or taught online. Indeed, as most of us learn quickly, a good many of the skills you'll need in the parish can't really be taught in seminary. Seminary is just part of the journey.

And your journey hasn't been so easy, has it? It sure hasn't. You've waited a long time for this day. You've been subjected to many indignities along the way. You've been asked to defend yourself—more than once—for having the *audacity* to tell the truth.

Perhaps there was a time or two when you wondered if it was all worth it. Perhaps you wondered if you should have just lied. Perhaps you wondered if this day would ever come.

This day is here. And everything you did to get here was worth it. In fact, everything you did, everything you went through to get to this day has increased in you the gifts and skills you'll need to be the best pastor you can be here.

The journey is good. Scripture teaches us that. Journeys are good. From Exodus to Acts, the Bible is one exciting adventure story, full of folks journeying and learning.

If you've spent much time with Luke's gospel, you may have noticed that the journeying metaphor overarches. It seems as though every narrative begins with a notation about where Jesus and the disciples are today, where they were yesterday, and sometimes where they're going to be tomorrow. Luke's whole gospel is the story of a journey—from Nazareth to Bethlehem and back. All over the Galilee. Samaria. Bethany.

Jerusalem. [pause]

We're spending a little time with Luke's gospel today. [To Dawn.] Excellent choice. An especially brilliant choice to connect two stories which the lectionary never puts together, but should—the stories of a woman healed and disciples sent.

This is an important moment in the third gospel. Pinnacle moment, really. Jesus and the disciples have been journeying around the Galilee—Nazareth, Capernaum, Lake, Shore, Capernaum, Lake, shore...and he's realized that they are ready to do ministry on their own. So he lets them witness a couple more miracles—for good measure—calls them together and sends them out.

Then, Luke tells us, he “set his face to go to Jerusalem.”

He sent the disciples out to do the things that he would soon be unable to do, since he was now on the journey to Jerusalem.

[To Dawn] You have been called here to do ministry in his name, to do it *for him*, and *for his people*. You'll have a lot of different tasks to do. In the coming weeks and months, you'll discover new and wondrous tasks you *didn't even know* you were called here to do.

But really, you've been called here to do two things. The **same two things** that all pastors have been tasked with since Jesus extended those first letters of call to twelve motley fellows on a road in the Galilee.

“He sent them out,” St. Luke declares, “to proclaim the kingdom and to heal.”

He sent them out to **proclaim the kingdom** and **heal**. You're going to do a lot of things here. But **you are here to proclaim the kingdom** and **heal**. Everything else is done in service to the ministry of proclamation and the ministry of healing.

And what do you need for the ministry of proclamation and the ministry of healing? Pretty much what you've got on you right now. Oh, no one will begrudge you a car and a cute little beagle dog. But you don't need much else. In fact, it's better that you don't have a whole lot else.

Jesus was smart. Feel free to write that down.

He knew that his disciples had learned what they needed to know. He knew that they were ready. AND he knew that one of the hardest parts of ministry was asking for help. So he forced them to do it. He forced them to accept the hospitality of those to whom they would minister. He forced them to work and live **alongside** those ones, not up above them like so many of the religious leaders who had forgotten that they were called to serve and minister *with* the people.

[To Dawn] Don't be afraid to ask for help. Don't be afraid to accept hospitality. Don't be afraid to let The People be in ministry right there with you. It doesn't make you weak—it makes the ministry strong.

Especially the healing ministry. Surely the call to be Pastor of Parish Programs is a call to healing ministry. And surely the call to be Pastor of Parish Programs at St. Francis Lutheran Church is a call to partner with this people in healing the world.

One last thing—a lesson about healing ministries which Luke is offering us today: you don't always know how the healing happens, and how far-reaching it is. Jesus healed a woman in the road. Or did he? It's really not clear. She touched his clothing, and power went out of him. But how she was healed is left deliciously ambiguous. In fact, *Jesus* tells her that it is *her faith* that has made her well.

Faith heals people. As ministers of the gospel, we don't have to perform miracles. We just have to get people in touch with the one who performs miracles. Help people encounter Jesus. There they will find healing.

We won't always know how they find it. We won't always know we had something to do with it. I don't know if this congregation knows how many folks you've healed. I don't know if you know that people all over this country—people in our churches, people in our seminaries, people who **aren't even Lutheran**—look to you as the vanguard of the future. We know that there will be a day when the church will follow Jesus into loving acceptance of all who kneel at Christ's altar. We know that day will come because it came here a long time ago.

This congregation's journey has been one of healing—healing for a lot of the people who live around here. And healing for people you've never met. Today your journey intersects with the journey of one of those people who knew you before she had actually met you.

I told you Jesus was smart!

We have a serious religious rite to engage now. It is the end of one journey and the beginning of another. A journey of hope and a journey of healing for all the world. Thanks be to God. Amen.

***It is not this day which makes you a Pastor. It is all of the days which came before it. It is the time you have spent studying, learning, working, teaching, failing and becoming a better person for it, and **waiting**, which have made you a Pastor.

Today we simply have the privilege of affirming that time, that journey, and the fact that it has brought you here, to this place, to this people, to this moment.

St. Francis Lutheran Church
152 Church Street, SF, CA 94114-1111
Phone: (415) 621-2635; Fax: (415) 621-8819
E-mail: StFrancisSF@sbcglobal.net
www.st-francis-lutheran.org