

November 13, 2005 Progressive Pathways Fellowship Rev. James Hensley
Ordination Sermon

Please repeat after me.

Qapla'

One more time. Qapla'.

See Robi. Klingon is a liturgical language.

But wait a minute. Before we get into that. I want to thank everyone for being here today. It mean's a lot to me that you're here. And now, before I get weepy, let's move on.

Qapla'. It mean's victory (or success, maybe). You'll have to check me at the Klingon Language Institute website but for today we're going with victory. Maybe even a little success.

We luvvv to be winners. We may cheer for the underdog but after the dust settles we'll follow the winner, the victor. To the victor go the spoils. Our sports are organized like that, our political system is organized like that and we even have our educational system set up that way.

But we can't all be the victors. Now that bites. Maybe the mayor didn't show up at our graduation and turn into a giant snake. We had to actually sit there and listen to the boring speeches all afternoon. None of us have manifested that amazing mutant ability we've been waiting for. Or at least nobody's gone public yet. It's 9 to 5 jobs without even the comfort of a secret identity. Boring.

People don't care much for losers. You have to know how to pronounce that one too. It sounds like this. Luzer! We might feel sorry for victims but we scorn losers. There doesn't seem to be any honor in fighting the good fight unless you can win.

Qapla'. That's what it's all about.

You folks ordained me today. I'm grateful. It's taken years. We're a tiny, new faith community starting out fresh with out any ties to any of the big organized religions. We're an unorganized religion. Being an unorganized religion will make you crazy if you're not careful. I'll get back to you on that later.

So, let's get out there and win one for the griper. I mean the gipper. No. Really. Did you hear that we're worse than right-to-lifers according to the Frankfort political set? What's up with that? Have you noticed that every time a conservative candidate falters they start gay-baiting before they start race-baiting? It's true. Look at the reaction to gay marriage. Is it a deep reverence and respect for tradition as they understand it or the petulant scream of a majority that refuses to give up one more privilege to a despised minority?

Who is this we, you may wonder. Well. That would be you and I. We're the people standing before the water gate listening to Ezra and Nehemiah read from the book. The people demanded that the book be read and then they wanted to Levites to explain it to them. The people of Israel were a pretty unorganized religion at that time themselves. They had returned from captivity to find their city a wasteland and their country occupied. Now what are they going to do?

Silvanus knows beyond a shadow of a doubt that Jesus has changed the world and changed it for the better. But he also knows that people still wear folly like a cloak and take their seat on the throne of ignorance. How is he going to deal with that?

Now, in case you haven't checked your scorecard, let's see how our heroes fared. After rebuilding the city of Jerusalem, Israel was invaded and conquered by a few other empires and eventually the nation was wiped out by the Romans after the city and the temple was burned.

Silvanus and his writings were condemned as heretical and burned. Other than being mentioned as an associate of Peter in the New Testament we don't really know who he was and if he actually wrote this book. These writings end up in Nag Hamadi even though they disagree with the Gnostics on quite a few points.

Losers. They were losers. And yet in the 21st century we're still thinking about what they wrote and learning from their example.

There are things for our little unorganized religion to do. We're waiting for the first ministries to develop. Maybe it'll be Lesbian and Gay Justice, or Gnostic Christianity or ReiKi or a Book Study. Maybe it's time we designed our lay ministry training curriculum or got the ball rolling to be recognized as a campus ministry at UofL. Who knows. Should it be Recovering Protestants and Unrepentant Catholics? It could happen. It's not all about winning the election or wiping the opposition off the map. It's about listening to the holy one and choosing the pathway that will lead to the divine. That's not going to look the same for everyone. You don't have to be a member of a vast herd, wandering the prairies, following some bull just because he happens to be in front.

Qapla'. Choose your own path. Let us know what you find. There are many pathways into the presence of the divine.