

St Stephen's Anglican Church
Father Mike's Sermon, March 3, 2013

The sermon this morning is taken from the Gospel: "Truly the harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few."

In the name of the Father, and the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

We are celebrating the feast of St David today. St David is the patron St of Wales. I love the Welsh people. I was visiting in the United Kingdom and ran into Welshmen, they were the only people who had as many vowels as I did in their names. And, of course, they had so many more consonants than anybody could ever imagine, and they were arranged and vocalized in ways that were strange to everybody but them.

They are particular in their culture and in their language, though they're a part of the United Kingdom. And in that sense, a patron saint for them is a good patron for us as well because, like the Welsh people, we are particular in our language and in our culture and yet very much a part of the whole church Catholic. St David is also a very good saint to be talking about on a day when we make somebody a Subdeacon because the qualities that he exhibited in his life are the very qualities that the Subdeacon is also going to have to exhibit in his life.

First of all, he was a defender of Wales. He fought against the English, and he fought under the banner of his Lord, our Lord, against the English who were under the banner of the same Lord. But he was a defender of his faith, a defender of his people. Wiley will also have to be a defender of his faith. And I know he is well armed to do that, not just because he has a lot of guns in the house. But he's well armed because he has inquired diligently about his faith, and he has worked to understand it and to explain it. He will be, like St David, a worthy defender of the faith.

St David was a founder of monasteries; he founded 12 monasteries throughout Wales, and his monasteries were particularly suited to prayer and to study. And there again, we have an apt description of Wiley. Since I've known Wiley, I have seen him devour book after book, sometimes book after book even in a single day. And in those books always looking towards deepening his understanding of his faith and his ability to serve. And he does that humbly. He would have fit in beautifully in any one of St David's monasteries.

St David was a powerful healer and a consoler. Among the miracles that are attributed to him particularly were miracles of giving sight to the blind. And on several occasions, he raised people from the dead because he had pity on people that were left behind and their need for consolation. Of course, the person who has gone beyond makes the sacrifice of coming back; they're already where they were meant to go. And when they were raised and brought back, that is a real tremendous and powerful gift that is given to the living -- to surrender your time in Heaven to be with your loved ones here on earth for a little while.

Since I've known Wiley, he has been visiting. I took him with me with I was covering for Father Rhae at one of the nursing homes downtown, and people took to him in a second. They just connected with him. No matter what their infirmity, there was an

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electric and real connection between Wiley and the people who were in that service. And I've seen that since then. He is the first to visit the sick, and he is someone who is there to console those who have had losses. I think it is really fit, and more than fit, it is to the benefit of this parish that he now be made the lay Eucharistic minister -- that when he makes those visits, he can also bring with him the Body and Blood of Christ so that his consolation and prayers can be made even more powerful, can be made complete.

St David was a mystic, and anybody who participates at the altar has to be a mystic too. I know that Wiley aspires to be a mystic. I know that he cares about the beautiful transformation that happens from bread and wine to the true Body and Blood of our Lord that nourishes us. And he cares to understand it, and he yearns to be part of that service, and he aches to be able to share it. And that will make him a powerful and a beautiful minister not only for this church but for his Lord.

And finally, with the approval of the Archdeacon, Wiley will be able to preach under certain circumstances. Now, I don't know how often Wiley will get here; I'm not giving up this space very easily. I'm not giving it up at all. But as Father Hawtin says often, "Preach the Gospel always; when necessary, use words." Wiley will be preaching all the time. Now people will be watching you. They will be watching you. And you will be preaching by the way you behave, by the way you conduct yourself, by the way that people know the holiness of that place that is reflected in a holiness that will come into your life. You will be preaching. You will be preaching all the time. And I am confident that he will preach with power, and that he will preach with love, and that this congregation will be blessed because he represents it out there in the world.

So, as you begin your ministry as Subdeacon, continue in kindness, grow in holiness, serve the altar and this community as the Holy Ghost leads you, and always be the person that led us to select you and recognize the gift that was always in you to be a servant of the Lord.

In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Amen.