Welcome to the family

November 5, 2006 (All Saints' Sunday and Baptism of Myles and Riley)

Myles and Riley, welcome to your new family. Riley, you might be thinking three brothers is a lot, but in a couple of minutes you'll have two billion brothers and sisters; every Christian in the world will be your sister or brother. Another decade or so down the road, you might realize in a Sunday school or confirmation class that this means that your mom is your sister.

Weird, huh? But it gets even weirder. I've get some tough news for you, Riley and Myles. No matter how funny your biological family might be, your Christian family is even weirder. We are a strange family.

This family of Christ your joining is not just made up of the rich and famous. In fact, we're so weird that we think the saints in this family are the poor, the hungry, those who weep and wail and cry. It's All Saints Sunday, when we remember all our crazy relatives in this family – brothers like Francis of Assisi, who gave away everything he owned to help make sure his sisters and brothers didn't go hungry. Sisters like Harriet Tubman, who the Episcopal church celebrates every year; a woman who was so strange that when she escaped from slavery, she went back and risked her life repeatedly to free over 300 enslaved women and men.

We're a family with crazy ideas – after all, our brother and savior, Jesus, taught us that if anyone who away your coat, give them all your clothes! Be so generous to the point of ridiculousness… (Though Jesus didn't ask us to let people just walk all over us. If someone backhands you, turn the other check – let them know you won't meet violence with violence, but by turning your head, make sure they have to treat you as an equal, not an inferior that can backslap. If a Roman soldier conscripts you to carry a load for a mile, keep on walking for another mile, and have that soldier running after you to get his things back! We're a strange family with a strange sense of humor…)

Why in the world would you want to join such a weird family? First of all, we might be a strange family, but we're a loving family. We will love you your whole life, no matter what you do. No matter what, no one can take you away from this family. And nothing – neither height nor depth nor powers nor principalities can separate you, Myles, and you, Riley, from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

And there's another reason to join this family. We're weird, but we're weird because we're trying to turn around, trying to repent, from an even stranger world, a world where people go to war and kill each other, a world where people die of preventable diseases, where biogotry and racism and homophobia poison peoples hearts, even as we pollute the water and the air. That is the true strangeness, that we live in a world where we fail to love one another.

But there's good news for us. God has told us that God is making all things new: God will dwell with us, wipe every tear from our eyes. Great things, great things are happening in this world, through the power of God's love, through the power of this family, and most importantly, through you.

Riley and Myles, you are the newest saints in the world, you the hope and delight of all of us, your brothers and sisters in Christ.

© 2006, The Rev. Devin McLachlan.