

Homily of Second Sunday in Ordinary Time Year A, 2023

Isaiah 49:3, 5-6; Psalm 40:4, 7-10; 1 Corinthians 1:1-3; John 1:29-34

We have resumed Ordinary Time after Christmas festivities. Ordinary Time refers to those periods that fall outside of major liturgical seasons. The present segment of Ordinary Time continues until Tuesday before Ash Wednesday. Ordinary Time is the time to put the graces we received during Advent and Christmas seasons into action. On the meaning of Ordinary Time Jeffery Mirus writes, "If the faithful are to mature in spiritual life and increase in faith, they must descend from the great mountain peaks of Easter and Christmas in order to pasture in the vast verdant meadows of *tempus per annum*, or Ordinary Time."

The Church uses green vestments and green decorations during Ordinary Time. Green is the color that symbolizes life, renewal, energy, growth, health, fertility, and safety. A green light is permission to proceed. Can you imagine the confusion, or even the tragic situation that could result if a green traffic light is disobeyed? These meanings of green color are the Church's prayers for each one of us. Also, we received so many graces from Advent season to the Baptism of the Lord. Ordinary Time is a time of growth, blooming, flowering, and bearing fruits.

The first reading is Isaiah's prophecy about Jesus, through whom Israel would be brought to God. Jesus' mission would go beyond Israel as Isaiah prophesied, "It is too little ... for you to be my servant, to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and restore the survivors of Israel; I will make you a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth" (Isaiah 49:6). Jesus brought salvation not only to Israel but to the whole world. In John 8:12, Jesus acknowledges Isaiah's prophecy about him, "I am the light of the world."

We celebrated the disclosure of Jesus by the visit of the Magi last Sunday. Today, John the Baptist continues the disclosure of Jesus. "John the Baptist saw Jesus coming toward him and said, 'Behold, the lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.'" John testifies about Jesus by referring to Jesus' Baptism, "I saw the Spirit come down like a dove from heaven and remain upon him. ... He is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit. ... He is the Son of God" (John 1:32-34).

It is not only about Jesus but also about us that Isaiah prophesies, "I will make you a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth." Jesus affirms this in Matthew 5:14, "You are the light of the world – like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden."

The psalmist challenges us by this statement, "I announced your justice in the vast assembly; I did not restrain my lips" (Psalm 40:9). Injustice in our environment and our world will continue, and oppression of the innocent will continue if we who are called to announce God's justice restrain our lips and become silent in the face of injustice. Silence in the face of injustice aids and empowers evil. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a Lutheran pastor who was killed by the Nazis for resisting the regime says, "Silence in the face of evil is itself evil."

In the second reading, St. Paul reminds us that we who have been sanctified by the Holy Spirit in Christ Jesus by our Baptism are called to be holy and are also called to be apostles of Christ Jesus. As apostles of Jesus, we are called to witness Jesus Christ by reflecting the light of Christ through becoming instruments of truth and justice. This is a way to become the light of the world that Jesus calls us.

St. Paul's reference to our baptism reminds us the prayer that was prayed over us and a candle lit for us at our Baptism:

[You have] been enlightened by Christ. [You are] to walk as a child of light.
May [you] keep the flame of faith alive in [your] heart.

May no evil wind blow out the light God has lit for us. Amen. May no darkness consume the light God has lit for us. Amen. As Jesus instructs us in Matthew 5:15, let no one hide his or her light under a bushel. Therefore, go forth and share your light. There is a saying, "A candle loses nothing by lighting another candle." No matter how little your light is, let it shine!

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