

Homily of Second Sunday in Ordinary Time Year A

Ordinary Time begins after the Christmas festivities. Ordinary Time refers to those periods that fall outside of the 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 of life, renewal, energy, growth, health, fertility and safety. These meanings of green color are the Church's prayers for each one of us.

The first reading is Isaiah's prophecy about Jesus, through whom Jacob would be brought to God and Israel gathered to him. 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."

The prophecy about Jesus continues in today's Psalm, "Behold I come. In the written scroll it is prescribed for me, to do your will, O my God, is my delight, and your law is within my heart! I announced your justice in the vast assembly; I did not restrain my lips, as you, O lord know."

When Jesus arrived, John the Baptist identified him, as we read in the Gospel, "Behold, the lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world." John testified about Jesus by making reference 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."

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 called to be apostles of Christ Jesus. We will restrict our reflection to the guides that the first reading and the Psalm give us that can help us answer the call to be holy and to be apostles of Christ Jesus.

First Reading: "I will make you a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth." Of himself Jesus says in John 8:12, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." Of us he says in Matthew 5:14, "You are the light of the world – like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden." There is so much darkness in our world: dark hearts, dark attitudes, dark plans, dark policies, dark relationships, dark homes, dark establishments and institutions, and so on. As bearers of Christ's light, we are to keep our lights burning, and do what we can to see that darkness does not consume our world.

Psalm: "In the written scroll it is prescribed for me, to do your will, O my God, is my delight, and your law is within my heart." Jesus says of himself in John 4:34, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work." Also he says in John 6:38, "For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me." On the contrary, many of us prefer to do our will and not the will of God. For this reason, the work of God, in some cases is not done, and in some cases is not finished.

Psalm: "I announced your justice in the vast assembly; I did not restrain my lips." Injustice in our environment and our world will continue, and oppression of the innocent will continue if those of us called to announce God's justice restrain our lips (become silent) in the face of injustice, or worse still become proponents of lies and injustice. Silence in the face of injustice aids and empowers the oppressor and the evil propagated. The silent is an accomplice to the evil.

As apostles of Jesus Christ, we are called to live a holy life, a life pleasing to God, and to witness Jesus Christ as the "Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" as John the Baptist and Paul did. We answer this call by reflecting the light of Christ, by doing the will of God, and by being instruments of truth and justice.

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