

**5<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle B**  
**February 8, 2009**

**Readings: Job 7:1-4, 6-7; 1 Corinthians 9:16-19, 22-23; Mark 1:29-39**

**Follow Your Call and Sleep Well**

When our children were young, we took them on a short overnight backpacking trip in upper Michigan; it was on part of the Mid-Michigan Pathway. We left the car and hiked along the trail for several miles and then set up our camp. We cooked our dinner and had a camp fire. I always enjoy camp fires, but on this evening it was especially nice for warming us up. It was August, but we were hit with a cold snap with temperatures getting down to about 40 degrees that night. We weren't prepared for those temperatures very well. The kids' sleeping bags were the kind you use at a sleepover, not in a tent on a cold night. Well, we bundled up and crawled in our sleeping bags and everyone fell fast asleep; we were tired from the day's activities. But at about 2:00 in the morning, I woke up and noticed that one of the little sleeping bags was shaking quite a bit. It was my oldest daughter. She didn't have a lot of meat on her bones to keep her warm, and she was shivering quite badly. I gave her my sleeping bag for relief, but knowing that I didn't fit in her sleeping bag, and knowing that after four hours of sleep I wouldn't be able to fall back to sleep, I put on my jacket and left the tent and sat on a log to wait for dawn. And I sat there watching the stars; it was a clear night which contributed to the cold temperatures. And every once in awhile I would glance at my watch and be amazed at how little time had passed since the last time I had looked. Those three hours waiting for dawn to arrive seemed like an eternity.

And as I read our first reading from the book of Job, I was reminded of that night. Job says: ***"If in bed I say, 'When shall I arise?' then the night drags on; I am filled with restlessness until the dawn."*** I was definitely full of restlessness as I waited for dawn. I'm sure everyone here has had one of those restless, sleepless, nights. Maybe it has been because of an illness or pain. Maybe it is due to some stress or anxiety that troubles you and keeps your mind racing with fruitless thoughts. Maybe you are lying there cold in the morning with a couple of hours to go before the alarm goes off, and you wrestle with the decision to get up and get another blanket or just try harder to fall back to sleep. And in all these situations, it seems that the harder we try to sleep the less likely we are to succeed. The time moves slowly. You glance at the clock expecting that an hour has passed since last you looked, but instead it has only been five minutes. You want the night to end, for dawn to arrive.

When we are sleeping well, however, the morning comes very quickly. Our time spent in bed at night is meant for sleeping. When we accomplish what we are supposed to do, we are happy and time flies by rapidly. And the same can be said for the time that we are awake all during our lives. Sometimes our lives feel much like those sleepless nights; years drag by and seem fruitless. If we do not spend our time fulfilling our purpose in life, we will find it to be a time of drudgery that will seem to drag on with no relief. But when we try to do the Lord's work in whatever vocation He is calling us to, we stay busy and find happiness. Our life seems to fly by and we realize how short life is on this earth.

St. Paul tells us that his calling, his purpose in life, was to preach the gospel. It was

obviously not a decision he made on his own; he was persecuting Christians at the time. It was a calling imposed upon by Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit revealed to him what was to be said and written. And so he had no reason to brag or boast. His only claim is that he freely accepted God's call. He gave up his personal freedom to be a slave to Christ.

On this past Thursday, Father Ezequiel celebrated the 47<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood. Forty-seven years ago he accepted his vocational call. He gave up much of his personal freedoms to be a slave for Christ, to preach the gospel, to travel to a foreign country to minister to us. We say thank you God for Fr. Zeke's calling. We say thank you Father for accepting the call. I am sure the last 47 years have passed quickly. I'm sure much of it has been like a short and peaceful night. But I'm also sure that there have some sleepless night worrying about your flock. We pray for you that you are refreshed to continue your journey.

One of the ways that we can all refresh ourselves and prepare for our journeys through life is through prayer. Jesus teaches us that in the gospel this morning. Mark writes: ***“Rising very early before dawn, He left and went off to a deserted place, where He prayed.”*** Jesus prays before he starts His work for the day; to fulfill His purpose. After praying He says: ***“Let us go on to the nearby villages that I may preach there also. For this purpose have I come.”***

I encourage you all to reflect and pray to know your purpose in life, what God is calling you to do to serve the Kingdom. And I encourage you to respond to that call. And then pray some more each and every day following the example of Jesus that God sustain you on your journey and give you guidance. Your life on earth will be full of contentment and peace and pass by very quickly like a restful night's sleep. Have the attitude of St. Paul who said this morning: ***“All this I do for the sake of the gospel, so that I too may have a share in it.”***

**Deacon Joe Hulway**