

Second Sunday in Ordinary Time January 16, 2011

Readings: Isaiah 49:3, 5-6; 1 Corinthians 1:1-3; John 1:29-34

I Come to Do Your Will

Last Sunday's feast of the Baptism of Lord was the official end of the Church's Christmas season. In the liturgical year we have two seasons of preparation, Advent and Lent, and two seasons of celebration, Christmas and Easter. Filling in the rest of the year we have what the Church calls "Ordinary Time" which started last Monday. In Latin it is called *Tempus Per Annum*, or literally *time throughout the year*. So today we start the second week of Ordinary Time and it is called the Second Sunday in Ordinary Time, or the Second Sunday of time throughout the year.

The reason for using our English word *ordinary* to describe this time throughout the year is not exactly clear. Some suggest it is because we number the weeks through this long season using *ordinal* numbers. Remember the difference between cardinal numbers and ordinal numbers from your math classes; the cardinal numbers are the counting numbers, 1, 2, 3, etc., and the ordinal numbers indicate position such as first, second, third, etc.. Others suggest it comes from the Latin *ordo* and simply has a connotation of time and order. Regardless, as we proceed through this liturgical season, it is important to remember that it is not ordinary according to the word's common usage. It should not be common, or boring, or deficient in quality.

Each time we come to Mass, we should try to comprehend how extraordinary and miraculous our liturgy is. Each Sunday throughout the year we should celebrate the paschal mystery with the same focus as we celebrate it on Easter Sunday, the culmination of the year. In fact, in some ways, we can allow ourselves to become even more focused during Ordinary Time because we do not have as many external celebrations to distract us. Every Sunday, every time we attend Mass, is a glorious celebration and we need to pay attention, participate, and be involved with the liturgy so that it can be the source and summit of our lives as Christians; so that we can draw closer to the Lord and learn what He wants to teach us. I encourage you to pay attention to the words of all the prayers, of all the readings including the responsorial psalm, and also of the hymns we sing—Hillary and Luke do not choose them at random. God is trying to speak to us and we need to pay attention all year long.

In our three readings today we have Isaiah, Paul, and John the Baptist as our three main characters. All had special missions from God. All three were called and set apart while they were formed in their mothers' wombs—although Paul needed to be knocked off his horse and blinded before he would pay attention and hear his calling. All three humbly recognized that they were not important themselves; the job they were called to was to point the way to Christ.

Last week was the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord but we hear once again today another account of that event, this time from the Gospel of John. John the Baptist claims that the reason he is baptizing with water is so that the Messiah can be revealed to Israel. And he says a few chapters later in John's gospel: "***No one can receive anything except what has been given him from heaven. You yourselves can testify that I said (that) I am not the Messiah, but that I was sent before him. The one who has the bride is the bridegroom; the best man, who stands and listens for him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice. So this joy of mine has been made complete. He must increase; I must decrease.***" (John 3:27-30) John compared himself to the

best man at the wedding; the wedding between Christ and His Church. And he slips into the background to make sure the focus stays on Jesus.

St. Paul says today that all those everywhere, who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, are called to be holy. It's a reminder that we are all called to be holy, to become saints. And we do that each and every day by humbly trying to hear and follow God's will for us and by pointing the way to His Son, Jesus Christ. We do not become holy by exalting ourselves.

Our psalm response today was: "***Here am I, Lord; I come to do your will.***" It's a simple verse we can sing without thinking, but it's one that should be on our lips every day. That's really what our lives should be about; doing God's will, not our own. The psalmist wrote: "***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!***"

So today I ask you to reflect:

- Is doing God's will your delight? Or do you pray to God asking that He grant fulfillment of your own will? Or do you maybe even pursue delights contrary to God's will?
- Do you search out God's law written by the Holy Spirit on your heart? Or have you allowed your heart to become hardened and no longer search out the truth? Do you accept the lies of society because they are more convenient?
- Are you willing to be humble and decrease so that Jesus can increase? Who is the center of your own attention? Where is your focus?

We are now in Ordinary Time, but following Christ should be an extraordinary pursuit. We may seem at times to be living ordinary lives, but we must remember that each of us is special to God and loved by Him uniquely. In gratitude and praise we love Him in return and each day we should say: "***Here am I, Lord; I come to do your will.***"

Deacon Joe Hulway