

Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Year A

Is 58:7-10

Ps 112:4-5, 6-7, 8-9

I Cor 2:1-5

Mt 5:13-16

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Today is the 5th Sunday in Ordinary Time. In just a few days, we begin the season of Lent. But, for now, we are in Ordinary Time. As a teenager, I always thought that the designation “Ordinary Time” was a silly one. It just sounded odd. It still does. “Ordinary” is a word we don’t ordinarily use, in everyday conversation, to describe time. To call the only time during the week when large numbers of us gather together to worship in Word and Sacrament “ordinary” seems ... well, kind of, odd.

Yet, the more I reflect on the Church’s way of naming time, the more I sense the wisdom of our Tradition. The Church’s calendar consists of the great seasons: Advent, Christmas, Lent, and Easter, and Ordinary Time. Ordinary, as the Church uses the word, can mean, “when everything is normal” or “in the usual way.”

Isn’t that much like our own lives? Our lives have exceptional moments and seasons. There are births and deaths, weddings and baptisms, intense highs and intense lows. But they certainly are not life’s norms. Life is often a routine. Life usually has a repeating rhythm. Most normal days we do what we ordinarily do! Life’s soaring joys and deep sorrows and their attending sacred rituals invite us to pause and reflect on our journeys. These great events and our reflection on them are graced moments. The same is true of the Church’s seasons. However, it is in Ordinary Time, the days that do not celebrate the great events in our Salvation History that we, God’s people, work out life’s meaning. We strive to be Christians in the ordinary events of our lives: our blessings, our struggles, our relationships, our brokenness, and our instinct to seek joy.

It is in the ordinary times, in the normal ebb and flow of our lives, that we strive to be the people God calls us to be. And how do we do this? Our Scripture readings for today are direct in their answers. Isaiah tells us that the Lord cares about how we treat others. The Lord calls us to do the works of mercy: to feed the hungry, to shelter the homeless, and to look out for our families and friends. We are called not only to care about others. Isaiah reminds us that the journey to God begins with ourselves. We must purge our sinful tendencies to gossip about others, to be jealous, to wish that we were doing better, that we are happier, than those around us.

Today’s Gospel shares that theme of Isaiah’s. Jesus reminds us that, as God’s children, we are the light of the world; we are the salt of the earth. We matter. We are partners in God’s plan. God invites us, no, God demands of us that we care, that we notice, and that we believe that we can be an instrument of God’s goodness to others.

And that is why we gather here week after week. We gather around God’s altar so that this Eucharist can feed us. This bread from heaven is the source of the grace and courage we need to be God’s people. God’s people who, in the ordinary times of our lives, in our interactions with our spouses, our children, our parents, our neighbors, and

the strangers on the bus have a mandate to be the light of the world. As we receive this great sacrament of love, today, and every time that we receive, may the Eucharist enables us to move closer and closer to Jesus' view of who we are and how we need to be.