

January 20, 2019 Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

Bishop Bradley's Reflections on the Sunday Readings

Now that the Christmas/Epiphany season has concluded, and we find ourselves in what the Church calls "Ordinary Time" for the next several weeks until Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, the term "ordinary" might lead us to conclude that there's not much else happening but trying to get through these bitter temperatures and large snowfall we are enduring, along with so many other parts of the country. And yet, as we know, there are a number of important events that are taking place and being commemorated during these days. Besides the football playoff games taking place today which might be of interest to many, there is a kind of "potpourri" of important events vying for our attention.

As we know, this is a holiday weekend commemorating the life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and we pray for an end to the sin of racism and of the racial division and hatred that we sadly continue to see in our institutions, and perhaps even within our own attitudes. We pray that all people will be treated with equality and justice. We are also in the midst of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, which began on Friday, January 18th, and will conclude on Friday, January 25th, the great Feast of the Conversion of St. Paul. These are important days for us to pray for unity within the Body of Christ, the very prayer that was the closest to Jesus Himself, as He prayed to His Heavenly Father on the night before He died: "*Father, may they all be one!*". And on Tuesday of this week, we will be observing the 46th anniversary of the tragic Supreme Court decision which has legalized abortion in our country. This afternoon, many of us will be participating in an Ecumenical Pro-Life Prayer Service here in Kalamazoo to pray for a greater respect for human life, as I'm sure similar gatherings will be taking place throughout our nine counties. Tuesday, January 22nd is declared by the Church throughout the United States as a "Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children", and I ask you to find your own special ways of keeping that day sacred, through perhaps deciding to make it a day of prayer, a day of fast and abstinence, or a day when you make some particular sacrifice in partial atonement for the loss of the estimated nearly 60 million unborn babies who have been aborted over these 46 years.

So, even though we are in Ordinary Time, we have many extraordinary and important issues calling for our prayerful attention and for our efforts to work for change, repentance, unity and a greater willingness to follow God and God's ways in our world, in our society and in our individual lives.

Today's Scripture Readings for this Second Sunday in Ordinary Time remind us of what is so important for us to remember at all times: that our God is with us, and that our God loves us unconditionally.

The First Reading from the Prophet Isaiah teaches us that God looks at us, His People---the people of generations ago and the people of our own generation--and says: *"You shall be called by a new name...you shall be a glorious crown in the hand of the Lord....No more shall people call you 'Forsaken', or your land 'Desolate', but you shall be called 'My Delight', and your land 'Espoused'. **For the Lord delights in you!** As a bridegroom rejoices in his bride, **so shall your God rejoice in you.**"*

And in our Gospel Reading today, we heard Jesus, after his mother urged Him to do so, choose to perform His first miracle at a wedding to save a young bride and groom from huge embarrassment by miraculously changing water into wine. And it wasn't just a gallon or two, or just enough to get them through the rest of the reception; it was an extravagant demonstration of God's gracious goodness by giving them enough wine for 10 wedding receptions.

All of us are well aware that in our own day-in and day-out life experiences, there are times when we also run out of energy and spiritual resources; when we feel overwhelmed by stress and anxiety, overcome by problems and burdens, or unable to meet our responsibilities. That is when we need to celebrate the fact that, in the midst of the difficulties of our daily lives, our God is here with us, assuring us of His Love for us, and reminding us: *"You shall be called 'my delight'....for the Lord delights in you."*

What tremendous good news this is for each of us in the "ordinariness" of our lives: that when each of us, as a person of faith, goes to Jesus----when we are willing (as Mary told the servants in today's Gospel) to *"do whatever He tells you"* to do----we will absolutely find the miraculous energy and change of heart to do whatever it is that we need to do.

That is the Good News of Jesus Christ! God loves us and lives in our ordinary, human, sinful world with us. He is not about condemnation; He is about

salvation. God has come to be with us, and will never turn His back on us. He remains with us in the “ordinariness” of our lives, whether that’s in the high points of the “wedding receptions” of life, or in the low points of the social evils of our generation, and in spite of our human failings in general, and our own personal sin.

Today’s beautiful Gospel shows us that in Jesus’ Hands, ordinary water became delicious, fine wine. That was a foreshadowing of what we celebrate every time we come to Mass, because here, through the action of the priest, what Jesus did at the Wedding Feast at Cana, and at the Last Supper, continues as He miraculously changes, that is, *transubstantiates*, ordinary bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ to be our spiritual food and drink! As long as we put our ordinary human lives into those amazing and miraculous Hands of Jesus, we will also be amazed at what we will become, and how we can reach out to make wonderful, life-changing things happen in the lives of our sisters and brothers in Christ throughout the world.

God bless you, now and always!

Faithfully yours in Christ,

+ Bishop Paul J. Bradley