

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Two weeks ago, I was sitting in my office in the rectory and became confused about time. I was preparing notes for a meeting taking place at the end of January. I thought to myself, "I have plenty of time." Then, I looked at my calendar and realized it was already the last week of January. I became somewhat overwhelmed at the notion that the year is already 1/12th over. What occurred to me as well is that the Season of Lent will be here in two short weeks!! There seemed to be scarcely little rest between all the activity of the Christmas Season and now Lent. In praying about and reflecting upon the concept of time, a more fundamentally important realization arose. Since the beginning of Ordinary Time, the Gospel readings has laid a foundation to help guide us through the Lenten Season. In John's Gospel, we find the descriptions of Jesus as the "Lamb of God"; "Rabbi/Teacher"; and "Messiah." Jesus asks his first disciples, "What are you looking for?" and he invites them to come discover his divinity.

On the Third Sunday of Ordinary Time, Jesus exclaims in Galilee that the time of fulfillment is upon us and thus he invites his followers to a commitment to repentance and a belief in the Good News. Congruent with John's Gospel [Jn. 1:35-42], Jesus again exhorts his disciples to "come and see." The disciples leave their families and their worldly occupations to seek the kingdom. What is this kingdom the disciples seek and which the ministry of Jesus reveals to them? Mark's Gospel reveals the healing ministry of Jesus. On the Sabbath day in the synagogue at Capernaum, Jesus, in the midst of teaching, is approached by a man with unclean spirits. The man challenges Jesus and in response Jesus orders the unclean spirit to leave the man, and thus it is so. The people around immediately distinguish the teaching authority of Jesus, which evokes healing, from that of the Scribes. Jesus did not come to cajole nor to condemn; rather, he came to proclaim God's presence in our midst and by that to heal and reconcile those who came to him for healing.

This motif of healing continues in today's Gospel wherein Jesus visits the home of Simon and Andrew alongside James and John. When Jesus enters the home of Simon and Andrew, "he went to her, took her by the hand and helped her up." By this very human gesture, Simon's mother-in-law was cured of her illness. The scene suggests that Jesus and his disciples were overwhelmed by those seeking after Jesus to cure them. Jesus is exercising the ministry for which the Father missioned him on earth. Jesus himself shows us how important it is to take time for prayer and quiet reflection amid the busyness of life. Mark tells us, "In the morning, long before dawn, he got up and left the house, and went off to a lonely place and prayed there." Prayer is an indispensable gift and grace which can help center us, keep our minds, hearts and spirits balanced, and thus ever more attentive to listening to God speaking to us in our lives.

I wish to express my continued gratitude to all who support our parish financially, through volunteer efforts, and through prayer. These are indispensable gifts which are helping us to remain steadfast in faith and joy-filled and hope-filled in these difficult times. You each add to the building up of the kingdom of God. Let us keep our eyes firmly affixed to Jesus who is our way, our truth, and our life!

Fr. Tom