

The Second Sunday in Ordinary Time — January 19, 2020

So, today we settle into the Season we call “Ordinary Time” in the Church Liturgical calendar ! In truth, there is nothing ‘ordinary’ about it, except for the fact that we are not celebrating any special feasts or festivals, such as Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter, Pentecost, or any other special event. Effectively, last Sunday was the 1st Sunday of the year (but we didn’t celebrate it because we were celebrating the Baptism of The Lord.) So, we begin today with the 2nd Sunday, and will stay in Ordinary Time through the 7th Sunday, and then on Ash Wednesday Feb. 26th we will move into the Lenten Season.

Ordinary Time is a great opportunity for our personal renewal where we follow one of the Gospel writers very closely on each of the Sundays of the year. I mentioned to you back at the beginning of Advent that we were entering into the Gospel cycle of St. Matthew. I encouraged you to begin reading slowly that Gospel, and then by year’s end we would have come to a new appreciation of that text. I know some of you have already told me you are doing that Today, I invite you once again to join us if you have not already begun. Throughout the year, we will provide you reflections in the bulletin on many of the Readings. So let’s journey with Matthew as we get to study and come to know more clearly ‘The Lamb of God’ identified by John in today’s Gospel, as the one “who takes away the sin of the world.” What a great and rich journey lies ahead. Should you have thoughts, or reflections, or new awareness as you read the text, please share them with us, and we will share your insights with others if you wish for us to do so !

I have had occasion recently to work with a few people on their Funeral Plans Personally, I love these experiences. They are very sacred, holy, meaningful experiences. Forty-four years ago, when I began my ministry as a priest, I sure did not want to speak to somebody about their funeral plans. I would avoid it at all costs, especially when someone was nearing death and it was clearly evident that there was going to be no recovery from their current state of deterioration. Talking about death was a morbid thing who wants to talk about that?

Thank God that has changed tremendously, and today many people make very appropriate plans for their Funeral for the Liturgywhat songs and readings, and whom they would like to do this or that at their funeral service. What a great gift it is to a family when they are grieving the death of a ‘loved one’, to not have to worry about picking out Readings and Songs, and whether this person wanted traditional burial, or cremation, and many other details.

A good friend I was working with recently, when we had completed most of the details about the ceremony and the burial, I asked him about ‘his obit’ Who is going to write it? What would you like it to say ? What should it say ? What could it say ? How would it describe the way you have lived and experienced life ? While we were really

just kidding back and forth about ‘the obit’ I gave it a lot of thought later, and began to realize it was not, after all, just a bit of fun it could be a hugely significant issue. At the core of a real obit is the issue of ‘how I see myself, and how others see me.’ Just imagine all of the space and all of the issues that lie between those 2 realities. Maybe the core question is : What would you like your Obituary to say about you when the time comes ? You are shaping it today people see and hear and know much of it already Ahaaa

A little over a hundred years ago a man picked up the morning newspaper, and to his horror, read his own obituary ! The newspaper had reported the death of the wrong man. Like most of us, he relished the idea of finding out what people would say about him after he died. He read past the bold caption, which read “Dynamite King Dies.” He read along until he was taken aback by the description of him as a “Merchant of Death.” He was the inventor of dynamite, and had amassed a great fortune from the manufacture of weapons of destruction. He was moved by this description of himself !!! Did he really want to be known as “a merchant of death” ? It was at that moment that a healing power came over him. It was an hour of conversion for him his call from the Lord. From that moment on, he dedicated his money, energy, and resources, to works of peace and human betterment. Today, that man is known best, not as a “merchant of death,” but rather as the founder of the Nobel Peace Prize, Alfred Nobel !

As we journey through this New Year with the Gospel of St. Matthew as our guide I invite you to keep one eye on your “Obit” and what it is sayin about you as you live each day !!!

—Fr. Gerry Hurley