

Commentary on the Gospel for Tue, Feb 11th 2014

Our Lady of Lourdes (optional memorial)

Today is part of the Ordinary time – after Advent and Christmas seasons and before Lent and Easter season. I always thought that term rather odd; is this time so “ordinary?” In some ways I wonder if we can ever consider any time in our liturgical year as ordinary when you consider all that is written during those times. Miracles and teachings and fulfilling prophecies – certainly not meeting my personal definition of something that is ordinary or routine. Can we ever be ordinary after what we just celebrated with the birth of our Savior? Or knowing and anticipating what is to come in the next months?

Besides, today, February 11, is the celebration of the Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes. Now certainly, one cannot consider that too ordinary. The apparitions of Mary are always such powerful stories, so often involving innocent children who are privileged to see the vision. What I remember most about Lourdes is the movie, Song of St. Bernadette. In searching about this online, I found a great quote from the introduction of the film: “For those who believe in God, no explanation is necessary. For those who do not believe, no explanation is possible.” Isn’t that the bottom for most of our faith – if you believe, you can understand how these miracles can happen. There are far too many times when certain things connect or I am “led” in a certain direction. These are “God things” or what I like to call “God-incidence” way too important to have just happened by chance. I think this basis of faith with having proof helps to explain most of our readings.

I loved the reading about Solomon. Even as a child, he was a favorite Old Testament hero to me. I remember my mother referring often to the famous reading about Solomon making the decision as to the question about to whom the infant really belonged. I think she enjoyed it not only because of the reflection of how very wise Solomon was but also because it demonstrated the love of a mother. Solomon’s wisdom is evident in this reading as well. It is clear that he understood that while he built this temple, the real architect was (is) God. Solomon did not take unnecessary credit for its greatness; rather he emphasized the power of God reflected in it. Definitely, he is still one of my favorites!

The responsorial psalm continues to echo that sentiment of the greater glory of God and our appreciation of his “dwelling place.” I was reminded of so many classic St. Louis Jesuit songs as I read these passages. Knowing that we have a dwelling place of such comfort brings us much peace. The idea of one day in the presence of God being superior to thousands elsewhere is easy to understand. The harder part is living in a way that really reflects that and not being so focused on this “transitional” place and its distractions.

In the gospel, Jesus holds us to task that we go beyond the letter of the law and live the spirit. The critics were focusing on very specific behaviors (the washing of the hands) without regard to the broader picture and intent of why we need to be doing these particular things. It reminded me of how we sometimes in our daily lives lose track of why we are doing certain things – what the true picture may be. For instance, if I spend all my time assuring that my house is immaculate because that is what my children need to be healthy yet spend no time with them what does it matter? Of course, that was never a concern from my children, they never worried I was spending too much time cleaning (perhaps the opposite). If my goal is the well-being of my children, then every action should be consistent with that intent not just performing arbitrary tasks. If my goal is to be closer to God and to prepare myself for a life beyond this one on earth, then every action and how I live my life should be consistent with that intent not just following the letter of the law.

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