

Commentary on the Gospel for Sat, Jan 23rd 2016

Liturgical “ordinary time” is the time in the liturgical calendar when we are not feasting or fasting, but rather, we can dwell on the day-to-day events in the life of Christ, and how they impact our own lives.

We also are able to follow the history, really the story, of many figures in the Old Testament. When we examine the scriptures that record the events of these times of 2000, or more, years ago, it is often startling, or at least sobering, to discover that we could merely change the dates, and the events in the scriptures could well have occurred yesterday, or today, in our own “ordinary time.”

The headlines in our day probably would read, “Saul and Sons Dead; Israel Mourns Losses”. The military events are still so near to today’s world situation that comparisons are difficult to avoid. We feel the anguish of a nation who has lost soldiers and leaders in battle. We can imagine that David and his soldiers, already exhausted by other battles, and the terrible loss of Saul and much of his army, were at the point of despair. “How can the warriors have fallen in the thick of battle- slain upon your heights?” The text leaves us to ponder the dire situation of David and his army. They do not call upon God. They are lost in their grief and mourning. They are considering the next round of violence and summoning their courage. The hope of the people is revealed only in the responsorial Psalm, “... Let us see your face, Lord, and we will be saved”. It seems to be a perfect response for David, and a perfect response for us, to the turbulent events of our world. Let us be in your presence, Lord. Let us see your face!

The gospel reading for today is one of the shortest of the year. Jesus and his disciples came into the house. It was, no doubt, one of the small homes that most people of the time lived in. Jesus and his disciples barely would fit into such a house. To add to the difficulty, Jesus’ presence attracted a large crowd. It is easy to imagine the close, uncomfortable situation that developed. There would be no rest, no time, or even space, in which to eat. The relatives of Jesus were understandably perplexed by Jesus’ circumstances. It seemed to them that it was time to intervene; “He is out of his mind”, they said. They may have believed this because they felt that Jesus was giving too much of himself; he was putting his health in jeopardy. He was also so absorbed in his ministry that he could not interact with his own relatives. He was pouring himself out, emptying himself for others, sacrificing himself and his comfort. Even in the most mundane and easily imagined situations, Jesus indicated the reason that he had come among us. The Alleluia for today’s gospel asks us to open our hearts to listen to the words of Jesus. Ironically, Jesus doesn’t utter any words in this gospel; his actions speak for him. Give of yourself, even if it is uncomfortable; even if people say that you “are out of your mind” for doing so much for others.

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