

2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time

We all want to believe that miracles exist. The best part is – they do! Well, maybe you say to yourself: “Well, I haven’t seen anyone change 120 or 180 gallons of water into the choicest of wines”, as we just heard about in our Gospel today, when Jesus performed His first public miracle. The thing is that even though the news often doesn’t report it, there are many awesome things going on in people’s everyday lives that are miraculous. For example, today (yesterday), I attended the That Man is You! gathering over at Immaculate Conception in New Oxford, and I heard of some of the wonderful ways that God is working in regular people’s lives! And it’s so inspiring to hear – especially given all the bad news we’re constantly bombarded with – that God is so alive and working in people’s lives! Just look at what the miracle at Cana accomplished in the lives of the disciples – as the Gospel tells us today – “they began to believe in Him.”

Belief comes first. We must believe that God exists and that He cares enough about us to really have a plan for our lives, and so actually works in our lives! When it comes to miracles and God-incidences, without belief, it just amounts to luck or fortunate coincidence. But, as I said, as Catholics, we believe in a God who loves us tremendously. He really does – God loves you and me. And more than just loving us, He likes us. Did you know that – God really likes you? He’s for you not against you – He likes you. Our first reading today from the Prophet Isaiah puts it this way: “As a young man marries a virgin, your Builder shall marry you; and as a bridegroom rejoices in his bride so shall your God rejoice in you.”

So great, we believe in a God who loves us. Now what? Well, we have to live that belief out. If we don't live a belief out, it's just mere theory, or knowledge, at best. Belief without action is as useless as "a screen door on a submarine". Get the image?

Now, there're many ways to live our faith out – like the choices we make, and the deeds we do or don't do. But, one big way we must constantly be reminded about is prayer. Prayer is how we have an ongoing, personal, daily, lived, real relationship with the God who likes us! In fact, without prayer, a relationship with God is quite impossible. The thing is, our relationship with God through prayer will be as unique as each of us are from one another! Similar to how a parent loves each child in a family, and yet has a very unique relationship with each of them, so too is our relationship with God. We are all part of His family, the Church, and yet we are all called on a distinctive path of discipleship – one that is unique to us!

And just look in our second reading today where we hear how the Holy Spirit manifests in each individual in a different way for some benefit. And we hear about all these marvelous gifts – or charisms – wisdom, faith, healing, mighty deeds, varieties of tongues, and the like! Just like each of us are blessed with various natural talents – like, mine would be playing the clarinet or speaking Spanish – so too has God blessed each of us with various spiritual gifts for the building up of others in their spiritual lives.

But these gifts only come alive when we are seeking a real relationship with God – when we are praying, and when we are looking to partner with Him so that His will truly comes alive in our lives. In other words, these gifts are given to us in order to help others grow in their relationship with God. St. Paul had the gift of preaching – look how many churches he founded. St. Peter had the gifts of leadership and healing – look how his shepherding of the Church as the first pope caused such growth! Holy Mary had the gift of faith – look how her belief is a model for countless Christians in doing whatever her Son requests.

You may have heard the following story before: “A very religious man was once caught in rising floodwaters. He climbed onto the roof of his house and trusted God to rescue him. A neighbor came by in a canoe and said, “The waters will soon be above your house. Hop in and we’ll paddle to safety.” “No thanks”, replied the religious man. “I’ve prayed to God and I’m sure he will save me.” A short time later the police came by in a boat. “The waters will soon be above your house. Hop in and we’ll take you to safety.” “No thanks”, replied the religious man. “I’ve prayed to God and I’m sure he will save me.” A little time later a rescue helicopter hovered overhead, let down a rope ladder and said, “The waters will soon be above your house. Climb the ladder and we’ll fly you to safety.” “No thanks” replied the religious man. “I’ve prayed to God and I’m sure he will save me.”

All this time the floodwaters continued to rise, until soon they reached above the roof and the religious man drowned. When he arrived at heaven he demanded an audience with God. Ushered into God's throne room he said, "Lord, why am I here in heaven? I prayed for you to save me – I trusted you to save me from that flood." "Yes you did my child", replied the Lord. "And I sent you a canoe, a boat and a helicopter. But you never got in."

Spiritual gifts aren't given merely for us. They are gifts given to us for the benefit of others. I know some of my spiritual gifts – or charisms – are teaching and administration. What are yours? How does God want to use you to help others? We are most certainly the canoe, the boat, and the helicopter that others desperately need. God bless you.