

012008 SECOND SUNDAY IN OT

Peace be with you. My wife and I just returned from Tucson – we were involved in what some say was the largest, most attended Pro-Life March that the Diocese has ever had... and I hasten to add that many Evangelicals, Fundamentalists and other Protestant Churches prayed and marched with us yesterday.

In an ironic and touching demonstration of what division among Christians means – we Catholics were in the Cathedral with Bishop Kicanas leading us in a Respect For Life Mass – and hundreds and hundreds of Protestants were holding a Prayer Service in the hall next to the Cathedral. All of us praying to the same God for the same purpose – for an end to Rowe V. Wade... for a respect for life from conception until natural death. However, the Protestants joined us after Mass – we all received our ‘marching’ orders – and off we went.... Many of us praying the rosary – many singing and carrying posters and banners. I will speak about this a little more when we have our first Respect Life Committee meeting for 2008 here at our parish -- probably towards the end of this month or early in February.

The one thing I want to say is that in his homily after the Gospel, Bishop Kicanas said that on Friday, the Cathedral was filled with mourners, present there for the funeral of a respected and loved young teenager who was killed in a bike/automobile accident.

The bishop said that the early death of this young, much loved boy makes us wonder how the world will be different without that one life that was cut off early. Perhaps he could have been a doctor and saved lives... maybe he would have been a priest and helped lead people to repentance and confession... maybe he would have married and brought other children into the world. We’ll never know – and that was the bishop’s point about the 45,000,000 babies who have been aborted... we’ll never get to know if certain diseases might have been cured by one of those children... maybe AIDS would have been eradicated... but because of the desire for ease and comfort or situational

fear in the hearts of women (and perhaps in men as well) – 45,000,000 or more children were never given the chance to contribute to society.

The bishop told us that we Catholics – we Christians are being called – just as ‘the call of Yahweh’ is the theme of the readings today. In our first reading, these words: “The LORD said to me: You are my servant, Israel, through whom I show my glory. Now the LORD has spoken who formed me as his servant from the womb... I will make you a light to the nations,”

And in the Responsorial, “Here am I, Lord; I come to do your will.” And the Gospel had these words, “John the Baptist said of Christ: I did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water told me... “ And John responded to the call of God.

So one thread running throughout the readings for this Sabbath is that the Lord God is calling us – he is speaking to us... to each of us.... At any age... he beckons us to listen and to respond. One of my observations is that many preachers don’t preach about sin any more – perhaps afraid of offending people... or making them uncomfortable... to which I say that if we don’t speak of sin and tell it like it is – then we clergy are not responding to OUR call from the Lord God.

And do you know what I believe – what I tell you is sin... sin is for any sitting here today who have the Lord God speaking to them – asking for them to do something – and they don’t respond to the call. That is what sin is... and I believe it can be serious sin....

A thousand or more people – perhaps many more marched in downtown Tucson yesterday – with their bishop leading them... he was walking with them, exhorting them and telling them this is God’s work... to stand up in defense of life in our Country. Pro-Life activities are taking place in dioceses all over our country because this is the 35th anniversary of Rowe V. Wade. We marched with nurses and teachers and mothers

and fathers... and with priests and Protestant ministers... we marched with respite caregivers and retired military... young and old alike.

Is the Lord calling you to march? Is he calling you to prayer? Is he calling you to take life into the voting booth with you?

Is God asking you to write letters and respond to his call and grace in your lives? Is the Lord God asking you to help us find vocations – to encourage vocations so we will not have a shortage of priests? Is the Lord calling you to become a deacon? A teacher's aid?

Resistance is the sin my dear friends. Struggle with this. Pray about it. And open your hearts to the voice of God. This Second Sunday of Ordinary Time is anything but ordinary. To paraphrase one of our presidents of modern times: "Ask not what the Lord can do for you. Instead – let us be about what the Lord asks of us!"

Reading 1

Is 49:3, 5-6

The LORD said to me: You are my servant,
Israel, through whom I show my glory.
Now the LORD has spoken
who formed me as his servant from the womb,
that Jacob may be brought back to him
and Israel gathered to him;
and I am made glorious in the sight of the LORD,
and my God is now my strength!
It is too little, the LORD says, for you to be my servant,
to raise up the tribes of Jacob,
and restore the survivors of Israel;
I will make you a light to the nations,

that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth.

Responsorial Psalm

Ps 40:2, 4, 7-8, 8-9, 10

R. (8a and 9a) Here am I, Lord; I come to do your will.

I have waited, waited for the LORD,
and he stooped toward me and heard my cry.
And he put a new song into my mouth,
a hymn to our God.

R. Here am I, Lord; I come to do your will.

Sacrifice or offering you wished not,
but ears open to obedience you gave me.
Holocausts or sin-offerings you sought not;
then said I, "Behold I come."

R. Here I am, Lord; I come to do your will.

"In the written scroll it is prescribed for me,
to do your will, O my God, is my delight,
and your law is within my heart!"

R. Here am I, Lord; I come to do your will.

I announced your justice in the vast assembly;
I did not restrain my lips, as you, O LORD, know.

R. Here am I, Lord; I come to do your will.

Reading II

1 Cor 1:1-3

Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God,
and Sosthenes our brother,
to the church of God that is in Corinth,

to you who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be holy,
with all those everywhere who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord
and ours. Grace to you and peace from God our Father
and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Gospel

Jn 1:29-34

John the Baptist saw Jesus coming toward him and said,
“Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.

He is the one of whom I said,

‘A man is coming after me who ranks ahead of me
because he existed before me.’

I did not know him,

but the reason why I came baptizing with water
was that he might be made known to Israel.”

John testified further, saying,

“I saw the Spirit come down like a dove from heaven
and remain upon him.

I did not know him,

but the one who sent me to baptize with water told me,

‘On whomever you see the Spirit come down and remain,
he is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.’

Now I have seen and testified that he is the Son of God.”