

HOMILY FOR 25th SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

I remember journeying to Wrenthem Village. As I made my way past an endless string of stores I came upon an elderly woman who was gazing at herself in a small mirror. She was putting the mirror back in her pocketbook when she realized that I had “caught her in the act.” Without batting an eye, she said to me, “I had to remind myself how beautiful I am.”

Without realizing it, this elderly woman summarized a truth that God continually tries to communicate to us...how beautiful each one of us is. Beautiful because we were created by God...beautiful because Christ came and suffered His passion and death out of love for us...so beautiful that Christ gives us His body and blood every time we come together to celebrate Eucharist.

But sadly we often don't recognize that beauty within ourselves nor within our sisters and brothers. Far too often we are like the disciples on the road to Capernaum...wrapped up in themselves and only concerned for their own advancement and well-being. Oblivious to the blessings they already possess, the disciples want to chase after those things that they perceive might selfishly bring them happiness.

So how did Christ respond to this self-absorbed pursuit of prestige and power? Very simply...He placed a child in their midst. And in doing so He was saying to them: "Look at this child...this symbol of innocence and purity looks at life with a loving openness that is unequalled. This is how you need to live: seeing things not from a perspective of self-enrichment but from a perspective of openness to the beauty of yourself and the world around you."

It reminds me of a story of several teenagers who were sitting together in a crowded theatre, waiting for the film to begin. One of them decided to go buy some popcorn. But when he returned the houselights were out and the film was beginning.

He walked down the darkened aisle looking for his friends. Back and forth he went...but to no avail. He just couldn't find them. Finally, in total frustration, he stopped and asked in a loud voice, "Does anybody recognize me?"

I wonder...do we recognize who we are? Do we recognize each other? Do we recognize the beauty that is the center of our lives and which is only lost when we forget to bring forth the gentleness, the mercy and the peace of God? How tragic it is when we forget how beautiful we are. How much the world loses when we are less than God created us to be.

The past few weeks has seen a frightening explosion of violence and hatred. In Afghanistan and Tunisia, in Libya where Chris Stevens our ambassador was killed, in Cairo and Sudan, and in Lampur and Benghazi. We have once again been shocked by the hatred and fear and lack of respect for religious freedom that infects our world. The child that Christ placed in the midst of his disciples are our children, and the children of Muslims and Jews. The child placed in our midst suffers when we fail to remember than in caring for our children and the children of every nation and nationality, we are caring for Christ.

St. James warns us that when any of us seek after our own passions, we end up with wars and conflicts. St. James calls us to change our lives. If we would seek after peace, we must turn our hearts to love. If we pray for peace, we must turn our hearts to forgiveness and compassion. If we would work for peace, than we must recognize that God fills us with beauty. We must learn to recognize that beauty and that love in each other and in all those who are our sisters and brothers in this country and in every country.

God is at work in our lives. God is calling us to live lives worthy of who we as God's children. God is calling us to be ambassadors of peace in what we say, what we do and how we live our lives.