

Homily for 2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time

Once upon a time there was a young man who was charming, handsome, witty and a great athlete. Everyone in his high school loved him, especially one quiet, thoughtful girl who was too shy to talk to him. Someone told him about her feelings toward him. He dismissed her with a laugh. She was pretty and smart...but not good enough for him.

Eventually he married someone else. They didn't have a great life together. At their 25th High School reunion, his wife constantly nagged him and he himself was a failure – his best days left long ago on a football field. On the other hand, the quiet girl had become a famous writer and was the most striking woman at the reunion. Her husband was a successful doctor who told everyone that he would not have made it through medical school without his wife's support and determination.

On the way home after the party, the one-time hero became very quiet. He began to think and he realized who that shy, quiet girl of so long ago really was. If only he had recognized her then, it would have made all the difference in his life today.

It is strangely ironic that so often in life we fail to recognize people, individuals and opportunities that present themselves to us. Perhaps, like the high school football hero, we think more of ourselves

than we should. Or, perhaps, it is because we are too busy to notice the gift of a single moment, a single individual or a single opportunity and so we fail to catch the tide of opportunity and possibility when it manifests itself.

How many of us look back with sadness upon those moments in our lives and wish that we could go back and make up for our mistakes? How many of us look back on time past and only wish we had recognized the value and wonder of individuals who God had placed in our lives? How different we would be today, if only we could have recognized those people.

And on a more profound level, how often do we fail to recognize Christ in those we encounter in life? How often do we fail to recognize Christ calling out to us in those in need, in the elderly, in the difficult child, in the impatient teenager, in the parent who seems to nag us or in the spouse who is hurting? How often do we fail to recognize Christ calling out to us in a friend who needs forgiveness, in an associate who needs understanding, in a loved one who needs our presence, our time and our gentle care?

The world prefers that we be absorbed by consumerism and materialism, by self-centeredness and self-absorption. The world prefers

that we not heed the voice of John the Baptist as he recognizes who Jesus Christ is and points Him out as the Son of God.

The world prefers that we not be like John and recognize Christ, for Christ calls us out to others rather than into ourselves. When we follow the call of Christ to witness to God's love that we are not enmeshed in the world's desperation but free to become builders of the City of God in our world today.