

**22<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Ordinary Time, Cycle B      September 2, 2012**

A few weeks ago I was returning home late one night. As I was driving, there were various stop lights and stop signs. After I had stopped for a stop sign and was proceeding down the street, I noticed flashing lights in my review mirror so I pulled over. I am thinking I really don't need this now. I just want to get home and go to bed.

As the officer approached, I had my license already pulled from my billfold. He also asked for registration and proof of insurance which I knew I had but had to find them in the glove compartment among all the other items in there.

His comment was, "you did not come to a complete stop back there?" There was part of me that wanted to take exception but I responded "OK". He took my license, registration, and proof of insurance back and minutes later, which seemed like forever, he returned, gave me them back to me and said please be sure you come to a complete stop in the future.

Of course I had a sigh of relief and proceeded home for a good nights sleep.

Our Old Testament and Gospel readings speak of statutes and decrees. Moses gave the chosen people of the Old Testament the statutes and decrees (the Ten Commandments – Deuteronomy 5) provided by God to Moses on Mount Horeb. Did they see this as a way to draw closer to God, to show God gratitude of how he had brought them out of Egypt and Joshua was soon to lead them into the promised land.

In Mark's gospel, the Jewish leaders are very critical of Jesus disciples because they did not observe the all Jewish laws, specifically the law for purification, the washing of hands before eating. Jesus immediately responds to the Pharisees and Scribes by asking if their following of the law was to satisfy the law or from their heart as God intended. You see the Jewish leaders had extended the washing of hands beyond its original purpose for specific times to washing before every meal so that every meal would be a religious expression.

Don't we struggle many times with the prayers or actions we do all the time? Do we sometimes offer prayers like the "Our Father" or the "Hail Mary" but may not think about the deeper meaning of the words? Do we sometimes make the sign of the cross after dipping our finger into Holy Water without recalling God's saving action in our lives through baptism?

Truly today God want us to reach out to him from our heart. Jesus tells us the greatest commandment is to "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your mind and all your soul, and your neighbor as yourself". God calls us to a conversion of heart. A conversion where our life is changed because of God's saving action in our life. Does our life reflect God's love, His saving action in our life? Does our life express God's love to others?

I remember as if it were yesterday, the night I was sitting in the back of Church of Christ after a Lenten service. Pastor Ward had given the sermon that night but I could not tell you a word he had spoken. As I was sitting in that back pew after the service, he asked me, "I believe you want to receive Jesus tonight?" Truer words could not have been spoken. We walked to the front of the church and knelt down as he lead me through the "sinner's prayer". The presence of God filled me in such a powerful and person way that I knew that I would never be the same. This was the spring of 7<sup>th</sup> grade. One of the changes I saw in my life was swearing. Before, I could swear like very badly. If my parents had heard me, they would have washed my mouth out with soap. After that night, I stopped swearing. I had no desire to swear. Jesus became my best friend as I did not have may close friends in school.

The Church is so rich in its teachings, yes its rules. As we understand the reason/meaning behind them, they will hopefully draw us closer to God. Our Eucharistic celebration transcends time. Heaven and earth join at this altar as the angels and saints join us in our Eucharistic feast. Jesus is with us through the proclamation of his Word and in the elements of bread and wine transformed into his Body and Blood. Jesus offers himself to each of us, offers himself to all of us.

What is our response?

May our response be one of deeper understanding of God's saving action in our life. May our response be one of deeper gratitude of how Jesus is in our heart every moment of every day. May our response be one of reaching out to others, to those that God brings across our path.

May all our thoughts, words and actions draw us closer to God and to each other.

Moses told God's people the statutes and decrees were given to them so they may live.

The last four Sundays have been from the John's Gospel, where we heard Sunday after Sunday, I am the bread of life, I have come that you may have life and have it to the full, I am the bread come down from heaven. If you feed on me you will live forever.

Our true home is in heaven and during our time on this earth which is by God's design, we are to be Christ's hand and feet. We are to share God's love with each other, especially our families.

Our lives should reflect God's active presence in our life and should be different than the people who live their lives in the world and don't care about God's statutes or decrees.