

Second Sunday in Ordinary Time Year A

Have you ever got a compliment that really filled your heart up? I got one that I recall. I was working for this man and we were buying something and the salesman said to him, "Is this man your son?" The man said, "I wish he were my son." I remembering hearing that and wanted to leap mountains for this individual, to want to earn his respect or be worthy of it. I believe that God is here to speak holy words of affirmation to us today. In the readings and by His actions, God wants us to understand how beloved we are.

In the First Reading, we hear *It is too small a thing for you to be my servant. And You are my servant in whom I will be glorified.* I find these sayings so beautiful. It is God saying to us *I want you to represent me.* You might be thinking, "Me? Why would you choose me God? I am not worthy to be your servant. What if I mess up?" God says *You are my servant because you are my beloved and I trust what I have made for the mission I have created them for.* We see that in the Apostles God chose men He could work with, not for their perfection, but for their potential. Look at the Second Reading: *to those who are sanctified, to those who are called to be saints.* That is us. We have the potential to become saints. God, from our Baptism, has called us first to Baptism and now to be His messengers to the world. How do we live this grace out? Well, we learn to embrace who we are.

The first truth is that you are beloved and the more you and I live that, the better messenger, the better servant we will be. How do we live the truth of our belovedness? By spending time with God each day so we can reject shame and live in His light. One day, I was washing the vessels of the altar, and as I was washing them some parts of the vessel did not take the wash, the water went around them. I was thinking that my soul was like that, that there are places most likely saturated with shame that could not take the water of God's blessedness.

I have noticed in the Gospel that no one is cured of emotional trauma in an instant. It seems that the cure for that is to be with God. We see this is true as we see the characters of the Apostles develop in the Gospel because they were with Love and Love healed their brokenness. We must look at the areas in our soul that God is not able to wash right now and ask for the grace to present them to him. I am often surprised by God for doing this. He gives me this insight or program, and a friend comes at the right time and tells me about healing they have received. Though it is a process, more and more our soul will be covered with the true water of God's healing grace as time goes on.

God, each day, wants to compliment and show love to our souls. He wants to heal and strengthen them so we can bring the message of salvation and healing to all around us as well and free us from the shame caused by sin. God must love us deeply to entrust His holy word to us. To trust that we can help Him save others. But it seems to me that the ultimate sign of God's loved for us is in the Eucharist. Why would God become one with us if we were not amazing and beloved? God, of course, makes us beloved and ready to receive Him in Baptism and Confession. But hold on to this: God enters you and I, and becomes one with you and I. Why? Because He loves us.

I think of this now when I am handing out Communion, how the solution to all your problems, the healing for all the damage sin and shame has caused in your life is what I am handing out. I have to be joyful in giving mankind all they need. Jesus is the fulfillment of all desires. Yes, it is true that once we know Him we have received the pearl of great price and in Him our desires will slowly or speedily

become less because we have found what we are looking for. Our desires will change to wanting others to come to this love. We are beloved. Let Jesus tell you this moment by moment in your day.

When you feel shame or that you have to justify yourself or do it yourself, you have forgotten a most essential truth to living your life free. That is, that you are beloved. When you are tempted to sin, ask to understand your belovedness. When shame takes over, and I assume it does with most people, ask to understand your belovedness. Many, I believe, motivate themselves with shame. *You shouldn't eat that fatso. You should get up lazy bones. You should exercise lard butt.* And so on. Wouldn't our lives be so much better if we accepted that we were beloved and that would be the reason we want to take care of ourselves? Think of the way shame motivates us and I am sure that it is not a message from the Holy Spirit. God loves and motivates out of love for His people and He waits for us to be open to His Holy love.