

## 23<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time

### Cycle B-2024

God has hard wired me to be more of an intuitive type of person. Therefore, I am naturally interested in and plugged into more abstract realities. Examples include God and the communion of saints, life after death, the meaning of life, understanding the human heart and the human condition, and pondering the deeper meaning of a given reality or situation. Doesn't that sound like an ideal ministry description for a priest?

Over the last few years, even though I remain intuitive, my consciousness has evolved. I have become more in sync with concrete reality that can be experienced through the five senses. In a manner that formerly alluded me, this shift in awareness, had led to a beautiful transformation in how I encounter reality. This involves how I experience God, other people, creation, and life itself. Being more specific, earlier in my life, when I got into my vehicle, the focus was solely to get from point "A" to point "B." All I wanted to do was to get to the end

of the journey. Now, I enjoy the sights along the way, and delight in some good music. I realize that is about the journey itself. God has blessed me with the epiphany “that heaven and earth are filled with His glory.” It is His glory that has brought everything into existence, sustains it in being, and radiates through all He has made.

Our first reading from the Book of Isaiah uses sensory image to connect us with the reality and glory of God. The sacred writer proclaims: “Then will the eyes of the blind be opened, the ears of the deaf be cleared; then will the lame leap like a stag, then the tongue of the mute will sing.” The more we open ourselves up to the Spirit of the Living God, our eyes will be opened. God will help us to see Him in people, places, things, and situations, that we would have previously been blinded to. Our concept of holy and sacred will go beyond just the church building, sacred art, sacred music, sacramentals, and religious conversations. We will come to see the whole universe as God’s Cathedral where He is always present and active. We recognize we are on holy ground in the most ordinary of life circumstances. For example, working, and serving those entrusted to our

care; sharing a festive gathering with family and friends; drinking coffee on the porch and savoring the beauty and awesomeness of the morning sunrise; playing with your children or your beloved pets; or enjoying those passions and hobbies that make us feel most alive or like our truest self. These seemingly unspiritual experiences come to possess spiritual and eternal significance for us under two conditions. First, we recognize and celebrate the goodness of God manifested in them. Second, we engage with them in a manner that is pleasing and acceptable to God.

The more we open ourselves up to the Spirit of the living God, our “ears will be cleared.” We will be able to more clearly hear and discern the voice of God in the depths of our hearts, through the stirring of our conscience, and in the circumstances of our daily lives. We become more in tune with what comes from God, others, ourselves, or the evil one. With a living faith, we will trust that innermost voice of God that says to us: “You are my beloved.” “I believe in you.” “Come back to me.” “I will not give up on you.” “I forgive you.” In our interactions with other people, we will listen to how God is speaking

to us both through their affirmation and prophetic challenge. Even the chirping of the birds and the barking of dogs becomes the voice of God for us, reminding us of His wisdom, humor, and goodness.

The more open ourselves up to the Spirit of the living God, that which has been “lame” within us begins to “leap.” We begin to leap when the lameness of our vice is transformed into virtue, our sloth and stagnation gives way to a revitalized sense of mission and passion for life, and our discouragement and despair is replaced by a renewed sense of hope. Our souls leap with a “sacred fire” that can be calm, yet determined and focused, and passionate, yet channeled in a mature and practical manner.

The more we open ourselves up to the Spirit of the living God, that which was “mute” within us, begins to “sing.” We begin to habitually express our praise and gratitude to the Lord. We become more confident in sharing what God has done for us and the reason for our hope; the voice of the underdog, and those in need of charity and justice; and more courageous in sharing the truth of Jesus Christ with respect and clarity. Being filled with the

joy of the Lord and the fire of God enables God to work through us, so that wherever we go, and whoever we are with: “Streams will burst forth in the desert, and rivers in the steppe. The burning sands will become pools, and the thirsty ground, springs of water.”

As my consciousness has evolved to include more fully the sensory dimension of reality, I have learned some important lessons through trial and error. Even though God’s creatures and creation are holy ground, only God is Divine. Nothing replaces our personal relationship with Him. These realities point to, and reveal the Way, but they are not the “way, the truth, and the life.” When created realities become more important than God, they ultimately leave us wanting more in a way that creates interior emptiness, disorientation, restlessness, and enslavement. God, on the other hand, leaves us wanting more in a manner that produces interior satisfaction, renewal, peace, and inner freedom.

If our daily lives are not grounded in both a formal and spontaneous way of interacting with God, these created realities no longer become signposts to God. Instead, they can become false idols and our personal gods, with

a small “g.” This brings to mind St. Paul’s words in his letter to the Romans: “They exchanged the truth of God for a lie and revered and worshiped the creature rather than the Creator.” By “loving God in all things and above all things,” both our senses and our intuition, in their own unique way, enable us to truly see and experience in its fullness, that “heaven and earth are filled with His glory.”

