

## **26<sup>th</sup> Sunday of the Year**

**What about Pope Francis! I am simply overwhelmed with his witness of faith. His ability to speak to the hearts of not just Catholics, not just Christians, but all men and women of good will is astounding. (use example of Joyce). The pope's actions of mercy and outreach to the poor underlines his call for mercy for all.**

**When he invests so much time and energy to visit a homeless shelter or a Catholic school filled with children from immigrant and poor families, he models for us the very heart of Christ. He leads the Church and ministers in the world in much the same way as Jesus. Francis lives out in word and action the very pattern of Jesus.**

**As we, the followers of Christ attempt to live our Christian lives, it would be well for us to focus on one question today: What is so attractive about this man of God? What speaks so directly to so many in our society that even the hearts of hardened residents of New York City mellow in his presence?**

**To assist us in our search, let us turn to the today's Gospel from the 9<sup>th</sup> chapter of St. Mark's. We hear Jesus' disciples reporting to him that someone is expelling demons in his name, but they tried to stop him because but he does not belong to their group.**

**Jesus' reaction to the man expelling demons: Do not stop him. There is no one who performs a mighty deed in my name who can at the same times speak ill of me. For whoever is not against us is for us. Anyone who gives a cup of water to drink because you belong to Christ, amen, I say to you, will surely not lose his reward.**

**When I read this passage, I immediately visualized the pope sitting in the midst of world religious leaders at the 9-11 Memorial in New York. As he said, all of them were joining in prayer for peace to God as revealed to each of them. But exactly what was the pope trying to say to us by praying with the religious leaders or by riding up 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue before 80,000 New Yorkers or by speaking to the United Nations or the joint meeting of congressional leaders?**

**He was putting flesh on Jesus' words in today's gospel, "If they are not against us, they are for us."**

- What was this vision of Jesus that so much is a hallmark of Pope Francis' ministry?**
- Why do his words and actions speak so powerfully to our weary world?**
- How can one man so attract the attention of so many?**

**In today's gospel, Jesus suggests an answer. The whole focus of Jesus' ministry is not to establish or build a church. He does not worry about the number of people in the pews or the size of the collection. He is not even concerned about people following him. His one goal is to announce the coming of the kingdom of God ... and this poor carpenter from Nazareth announces that kingdom by powerful words and mighty deeds. And Jesus invites his disciples like Pope Francis... and you and me ... to do the same.**

**But so often our vision becomes so narrow. We are like the disciples in the gospel. We only worry about ourselves or our family or our local parish or just those of the Catholic faith. Jesus' ministry extended to all people, especially to the poor, to widows and orphans, the aliens and immigrants in our midst.**

- His heart is the heart of his Father;**
- his spirit is the compassion of the Spirit,**
- His actions of healing and reconciling, especially his death and resurrection points to establishing the Kingdom of God.**

**And he invites us, his disciples, to join in the work of building up the Kingdom. Just as God has placed Francis in a unique historical moment to witness to his Kingdom, so to do I believe that the Lord**

**has placed us, his disciples at located at Corpus Christi Parish to be in this unique place to witness to his reign in our hearts.**

**God gives all of us a special outpouring of grace which has called us to follow Christ. God has gifted us with being members of a lively community of faith. We also live in a country blessed with so much material wealth. But there are so many in our midst, in our neighborhoods, in our parish boundaries, in our homes and schools, and surely throughout the world who need demons dispelled from their lives.**

**My brothers and sisters, Jesus' words in today's gospel to his disciples tells us that:**

- it is NOT enough just to be a member of his church;**
- and, although critical, it is not enough just to believe in him as Lord and savior.**

**But the goal of his ministry, and the goal of his disciples is to establish the Kingdom his Father, which is a kingdom of truth and holiness, of justice and peace.**

**(PAUSE)**

**This weekend at Corpus Christi Parish is Stewardship Sunday. It is a Sunday devoted to encouraging EVERY follower of Christ here, no matter what age or background, to recommit our time, talent and treasure to establish the Kingdom of God. At the end of today's mass you will be invited to fill out a form to indicate how you see the Lord calling YOU to commit yourself to establishing the Kingdom of God in our world.**

**First of all, it is a call to prayer: without a relationship with God, we have nothing to offer others.**

**Then we dedicate our time in service to others through the many ways by sharing our many talents and skills in Christ's name.**

**And finally we commit ourselves to share our treasure to help support the efforts to help build up the Kingdom of God in our community, neighborhood and world.**

**I would like to thank you for your generous outpouring of time, talent and treasure in the past. It has allowed us to witness to the goodness of the Lord to so many people who come in needs.**

**As we give thanks today for the powerful witness of Pope Francis, we pray that as disciples of the Lord, we too can with touch someone,**

**someone whom no one else can, with the mercy of God. May our prayer become one with Jesus, Your kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven.**