

SPIRITUAL LIFE

2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time

By: Fr. Greg Ames

Time and again, I come back to the writing of Verlyn Klinkenborg. His observations about life, written from his farm in upstate NY, always say something to me, even living here in suburban NJ. He wrote an essay about renovating his 18th century farm house. As he tears through walls and ceilings he realizes behind all that work, *there is another house and another set of lives... I wish that the house were more articulate, or that I were better at hearing what it has to say. I can hear the most recent occupants pretty clearly... but the ones who live here before them, all the way back to the first settlers, are nearly inaudible to me. I often marvel at the decisions the previous owners made. We have, for instance, enough wiring hidden in the walls for a commercial office building. I wonder who will marvel at the decisions I am making now. The trouble is that you can see only what remains—not what has been erased ... I'll rebuild, as best I can, from the bones of the house outward.*

Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you ...

The rectory I live in was a private home, long before it was bought by the parish. I still wonder what those nameless and faceless people were doing installing a non-working wood burning stove in the basement; the pipe for the smoke goes into the garage. And maybe, years from now, some other pastor will wonder what I was thinking painting my living room red and black. My home has a luxury that many of yours do not. It is quiet. With the exception of a dog padding from one napping spot to the next, or the heat coming on, or an occasional TV program, it is quiet. While I cannot hear the voices of those who came before me, the quiet enables me to hear a lot; not about the house, but about life.

Every week, we come to this house. If these walls could talk, they would tell stories of people, some you know, and some you never will. Stories of people at their finest hour and of people in their worst moment. If we listen, carefully, we realize that those stories are shaped and guided by the story of Jesus. What we hear in this house, should shape and guide the house, the lives that we build. So, how about today, real quiet and real listening. Put aside whatever preoccupation you have, and be quiet and listen to words that help us build and rebuild our lives.

What are you looking for? I find it very touching that this is the first thing Jesus asks. We are all looking for something: I want to be understood; I want not to feel so angry; I want to improve my marriage; I want to believe; I want to be nicer; I want to pass 7th grade. When was the last time you heard Jesus ask that question, and you gave yourself the permission and time to answer?

Speak Lord, your servant is listening. Samuel, asleep in the house of the Lord, keeps hearing a voice that calls him. He's sleepy and confused and distracted. He does not realize it is God. Every day countless voices are at us. Some complaining, some asking, some demanding, some talking about nothing and some about everything. Above it all God is saying something to you, and I believe we usually know what it is: slow down, stop being so judgmental, no matter what you have done, there is a way back, open your heart. We usually know; we just might pretend not to hear. In this moment, you are listening, what is the word spoken to you?

Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit It is Paul's way of telling the Corinthians that the Christian always carries the spirit of Jesus in his/her heart. And people are listening and watching and paying attention. Your life shows Christ to others who wonder where Jesus stays. He's in your life, your home. But would anyone listening to your life hear him? Sometimes we hear enough of your opinion, but do we hear enough of your love, your gratitude, your willingness to say *count on me*?

This church season called Ordinary Time focuses us on how we are living our faith. And in order to do that, we have to be quiet and listen. I know what you are thinking; easy for you. And right, it is. But you can only become a more patient person, a better parent, a more just and peaceful person by being quiet and listening to your life. Sorry, there are no substitutions in this recipe.

Maybe someone here today will find him/herself sitting this week in the kitchen. Not watching TV or listening to the radio, not reading the paper or writing a grocery list. Just sitting. And someone will walk in, and look at you confused, and ask, what's wrong, what are you doing. And you will teach them something very important when you simply answer, *Nothing is wrong, I'm listening.*

READINGS OF THE WEEK

1 Samuel 3:3-10 1 Corinthians 6:13-20 John 1:35-42

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你 們 來 看 看

蔡 惠 民 神 父

加拿大最著名的風景區露意絲湖畔來了一輛高級驕車，車上下來一對滿面倦容的夫婦，太太手裡拿著地圖對照著。「嗯，我們已遊覽過吉士坡和班美了，」她跟丈夫說，「明天該是露意絲湖了」。旁邊有個人忍不住告訴他們說：「這裡就是露意絲湖了。」這位太太一言不發，用鉛筆在地圖上勾了一下，跟她的丈夫回到車上，疾駛而去。

當你在街上，發現兩個陌生男子一直尾隨著你，很可能你的反應會像耶穌一樣：「你們找甚麼？」不過，耶穌的問題絲毫沒有不耐煩或質問的意味。作為整部福音中的第一句說話，祂是要勾起讀者心裡的共鳴：「你究竟在找甚麼？」「人生究竟是為了甚麼？」

「辣彼，你住在那裡？」陌生人的回應，好像是希望知道耶穌住在甚麼地方。其實，在若望的用語裡，「住」在那裡不單是指一個地方，而是要暗示更深的根源或歸宿。例如：父住在子內，子住在父內；我們住在父內，父也住在我們內。所以，「你住在那裡？」其實是問：「你是從那裡來的？」因為人從那裡來，又要往那裡去，自古以來就是人內心深處的問題。

「你們來看看罷！」耶穌邀請他們自己去揭開這個人生之謎。當然，「看」一字在若望福音中，不是指那種見山是山，見水是水的平常眼光，而是一種在信仰光照下的立體視野。兩位陌生人就是因著這種透視，發現他們眼前的辣彼，原來就是默西亞。

「你們找甚麼？」「你住在那裡？」「你們來看看罷！」耶穌與兩個陌生人的短短對話，看似簡單，原來已勾劃出信仰的神髓。信仰首先不是任何道理或經典，而是一種生活態度和價值取向。門徒起初稱耶穌為辣彼，意即師傅或經師，心想祂會像其他經師一樣，給他們講授經典。怎知，三年的公開生活，福音並沒有留下任何耶穌為門徒講經或授課的記錄。反之，祂往往透過生活的事例而隨機給予教導。路加福音曾經記載耶穌在會堂裡翻開依撒意亞書卷，但誦讀後，祂沒有作長篇的講論，只提醒群眾應從生活中領會這段經文的意義。門徒就是從生活的浸淫中，慢慢明白耶穌的真正身份，發現祂就是默西亞。

今天，雖然文字化的聖經已清楚指出耶穌是默西亞，天主子，但不要忘記，要正確明白這份信仰，以真情實感的生活作出發點是必要的。很可惜，不少人對耶穌的認識卻本末倒置，只懂耶穌之名，而不知耶穌之實。他們書架上的聖經可能仍保留當年慕道班的筆記，或相簿裡仍存放著過去一些堂區活動的片段。不過，這都是一些「到此一遊」的憑證而已，跟門徒從生活去明白耶穌不可以同日而語。

造成這種現象，當然與我們堂區的一般現況有關。一個教友由慕道開始，除了在慕道班的階段，有較明顯的小團體生活作信仰的起點外，領洗後便會在一個人際疏離的大團體中失去呼應。雖然堂區現存不少善會可供教友繼續加深信仰，但這些善會的成立，目的離不開維持日常運作及推行活動。這些服務是否能夠讓人「看」到默西亞，則是見仁見智。難怪一些堂區的中堅分子，積極投入工作多年後，一下子又可以失去信仰。

只知耶穌之名，而不知耶穌之實，我們未必會察覺，但我們會意識信仰與生活的疏離。每次到教堂參與彌撒，總希望從中得到生活的啟發；每次拖著沉重的家庭問題、工作困擾、人際傷痕回到聖堂，總希望從中獲得力量。不過，一次又一次，我們所認識的耶穌不是無動於衷，便是搔不到問題的癢處。一篇又一篇的道理，一條又一條的原則不獨毫無幫助，反而加深了自己的罪惡感。

「你們來看看罷！」耶穌今天邀請我們反思對祂的認識。長久以來，我們宣信耶穌是默西亞，但實際上祂可能為我們只是一位經師。如果我們不想繼續做「到此一遊」的基督徒的話，或許我們要在自己的家庭生活，工作環境，及信仰團體中……留下更多的空間，讓自己可以「住」下來，好能與那位有血有肉，有笑有淚的默西亞相遇。

摘自「公教報」