

2018 – Year B – 14th Sunday

Why's the sky blue? Growing up I often heard this question on a television commercial. The scene was a small child asking the question of a father. The commercial never gives the answer to the question. Instead they offer the brand of encyclopedias that they are promoting. Those of us who grew up before instant information on the internet, the encyclopedia was the source for all information, along with the dictionary. It was always something of a puzzle when you asked a parent how to spell a word their answer was typically to "look it up in the dictionary." If I knew how to spell the word to find it in the dictionary I would not have been asking how to spell the word!

Our lives are full of questions that determine what path we take in life. Some of the questions that we ask are very important and may be only made once or twice in our lifetimes: what college, if any, will I attend, what will I study, which job will I take, whom should I marry? Some of the questions we ask are done every day and often without a great deal of thought: what time should I get up at and what time do I need to get up by, what should I wear today, what should I have for breakfast, if anything, is it time to check my phone for emails/Facebook/tweets/messages, where do I go for lunch and with whom, do I go home after work or hang out with friends?

Questions are a key to how we advance in knowledge. I would suggest that all great advances in science and technology began with "what if?" The question is only the starting point. After the question is posed then the really hard work of experimentation begins. Often the experimental

portion of the work leads to dead ends that result in the asking of more questions until a solution or break through occurs.

Each week when we come to celebrate mass, we also come with some unresolved questions. They might not be the great ones that determine the course of our life. They might be the questions that we ask repeatedly, often hoping for a different answer. We come to pray over our concerns, we listen to the scriptures, especially the gospels, broken open for us, and we come forward to be nourished at the table by the body and blood of Jesus.

Each week we hear a portion of the gospel proclaimed and a homily that applies the gospel message to our lives. What we do miss in hearing only pieces of the gospel each week is that the gospel is a whole story, not just parts. The overall message of the gospels is that God loves us unconditionally. This message is conveyed through the life lived out on Earth by Jesus. Each of the gospel writers has their own style of presentation. When we hear a gospel read from week to week we often miss what the gospel writer is trying to express to his readers.

Our gospel has Jesus in his native place and those who heard his teaching were astonished. Ordinarily this would seem like a positive reaction, but not this time. Those who heard Jesus begin to raise questions about what he should know, about his parents and about his relatives. They had a preconceived idea of who Jesus is and what he should be doing. Jesus found their questions about him and their lack of understanding of who he is unsettling and did not perform any "mighty deeds." Here was a case when the questions were not asked to advance understanding, but to try and place Jesus in his place, at least where they thought he belonged.

Mark draws a contrast between this weeks' gospel and last weeks' gospel. Last week Jairus and the woman with the hemorrhaging did not question whether Jesus could help them in the hour of their need. They placed their faith in Jesus, and accepted it as a fact that he would be able to help them.

We will always have questions in our lives. Some of the questions may go unanswered forever.

Our faith in Jesus as the human face of God turned toward humanity gives us comfort and assistance in trying to answer the questions that life presents to us. Jesus came into the world to show us the way to live our lives as daughters and sons of God. Unlike those whose questioning of whom Jesus thought himself to be, we can move through life knowing that wherever the answers we select to our questions great and small, take us, that we have a loving Jesus as our guide. When we have faith in Jesus, just as those in last weeks' gospel showed, then we can be assured that Jesus will always be at our side.