

2018 – Year B – 2nd Sunday

If you are a sports fan, this is a time of the year when you have almost non-stop games to watch. The college football season is all but over with the recent crowning of the national champion. I think there are still a couple of all-star games to be played. Professional football is entering the middle of its playoff season, with the Super Bowl just a couple of weeks away. Both the professional basketball and hockey seasons are in full swing. In our area we know also that the college basketball and hockey seasons are also very active.

If none of these sports are of any interest to you maybe it is baseball that you follow? It is about four weeks before spring training is set to start. Even though no games are being played there is still a great amount of interest in which players may end up signing with which teams. Another aspect of this time of the year, at least when talking about baseball, is that every team is starting with the same record, no wins and no losses! Fans of all the teams can still dream of reaching the World Series and becoming world champions!

If I still have not found the sport that would glue you to the television screen, or an electronic device, remember that the Winter Olympics are a couple of weeks from starting. This year's games will be in South Korea, and it is expected that even North Korea will participate. The Olympics has a variety of sports, from skiing events of various kinds, to figure skating, to speed skating, to biathlon, even to curling! Maybe somewhere in there I might have finally struck a chord with you.

Whether or not you are interested in any particular sport there is one thing that we might agree upon. In order to reach the highest level in any of the sports mentioned you have to have something that drives you to become the best that you can. We have all heard of numerous stories about athletes that have made different types of sacrifices in their lives. Whether it is getting up early for seemingly endless hours of training, or separation from family in order to be near a coach or a practice facility, each individual athlete makes choices in order to succeed.

Today we begin another season in the church year, Ordinary Time. When the church says “Ordinary” it does not mean plain or unimportant. In Ordinary Time we are called to celebrate with all the joy that reflects what God has done for us through his Son, Jesus. Each of the other seasons of the year, Advent, Christmas, Lent and Easter each have their own character of celebration. When we go from Christmas, and the celebration of Epiphany and the infant Jesus, to Ordinary Time, with Jesus beginning his ministry, it is an abrupt change.

John’s Gospel recounts how Jesus is walking by and how John the Baptist points him out to two followers. Walking by seems like a very ordinary thing for Jesus to be doing, but when Jesus walks by something happens! When Jesus walks by Cana suddenly water is turned into wine! When Jesus walks by in Jericho Zacchaeus comes down from a tree and finds salvation! When Jesus walks by the ten lepers are healed. When Jesus walks by the blind man Bartimeaus, has his sight returned! When Jesus walks by in Bethany his friend Lazarus is raised from the dead! When Jesus walks by in Jerusalem, with the cross on his shoulders, our sins are forgiven! Yes, when Jesus walks by things are changed in ways that will never be the same again.

John's followers trail after Jesus, I guess unsure about what to do next. Jesus takes the initiative and asks them what they are looking for. They want to know more about Jesus and he welcomes them into his company. We are not told how long they were with Jesus or what he shared with them; it must have made an impression since one, Andrew, went and told his brother Simon, they had found the Messiah! This section of John's gospel spells out the beginning of the group of disciples that would follow Jesus, which would eventually lead to a new faith tradition, Christianity. Yes when Jesus walks by amazing things happen.

Wouldn't it be great if Jesus walked by in East Greenbush today? Wait a minute; Jesus is walking by today, and every day! When we were baptized it was in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. We were given God's own life within us. No matter where we go Jesus is always walking by, because everywhere we go we bring Jesus with us. The question we each have to answer is whether we let others know that Jesus is walking by with us. Can we be like Andrew and let others know that we have found the Messiah by the way we lead our lives?

St. Paul tells us that in his time athletes would deny themselves everything in order to win a crown of leaves that withers and fades. Today professional athletes receive more than leaves for the hard work and dedication they put into being the best in their profession. Since we are looking forward to something that so far exceeds anything that money can buy, our salvation and eternal life, are we willing to dedicate ourselves, and our lives, to doing what it takes to be the best of Jesus' disciples that we can be?