

So today, we are experiencing something we haven't had since February 15th – and it isn't more than a couple of days in a row without rain --- BUT, the season of Ordinary Time.

Daily Mass goers know that we have been back in this season for already three weeks – it's just that the feasts of the Holy Trinity and The Body and Blood of the Lord have kept us in the white of Easter on Sundays -- for two weeks beyond the end of the Easter season.

So we begin our methodical counting of Sundays from today's 11th Sunday in Ordinary time all the way to November 15th's 33rd Sunday in Ordinary time with just one interruption – on November 1st –

when we celebrate the feast of All Saints on a Sunday,
and so the 31st Sunday of Ordinary time falls out –
which I know is a great disappointment to you all. . .

I'm always surprised when even cradle Catholics
will say something like – “Oh you look so good in red
vestments, Father, you should wear them more
often” – as if it is my choice as to what color vestment
to wear.

Actually that is determined by the feast or
season we are in – green for Ordinary Time – white
for Easter and Christmas – Violet or purple for Advent
and Lent – Red for Good Friday, Pentecost, and feast
days of Martyr's who shed their blood – and just so
everyone knows real men CAN wear pink –

Rose, or pink vestments for Gaudete Sunday in Advent, and Laetarae Sunday in Lent. . .

On the Sundays in this long season of Ordinary Time – we read mostly from St. Mark’s Gospel, with a first reading from the Old Testament specifically chosen to go with the Gospel reading – and then we read large blocks of one of the letters of the New Testament – usually one of St. Paul’s --- for several weeks in a row – and that reading sometimes goes with the other two readings – but most times does not.

Many people think that because Mark’s Gospel is the 2nd to appear in the New Testament – Matthew, Mark, Luke, John –

that it was written after St. Matthew's – they think since Matthew comes first – it must have been written first. But the New Testament is not arranged that way. . . in chronological order. . .

St. Mark was actually the first to write his Gospel – around 70 AD – followed by St. Matthew and St. Luke who wrote their Gospels in the 80s, and finally St. John who wrote around 100 AD. This was long before copy-write laws were in place – so both Matthew and Luke liberally used Mark's gospel as an outline for their own – so almost all of Mark's Gospel appears in those other two Gospels, with very little information found exclusively in Mark's Gospel.

St. Mark is short on details – he is direct and to the point when it comes to the life and death of Jesus – with the final chapter of Mark on the resurrection possibly being added by some of his followers – rather than being written directly by St. Mark.

Today, we pick up with reading chapter 4 of the Gospel – so we are still relatively close to the beginning – and we hear a couple of parables of Jesus --- which are among the first to be found in Mark's Gospel. . .

So a parable, a story, of my own:

A woman was in a grocery store, following around a grandfather---- and his badly behaved 5-year-old grandson.

It's obvious to her that the grandfather has his hands full with the child screaming for candy in the candy aisle, chips in the snack aisle, ice cream in the dairy aisle.

Meanwhile, granddad is working his way around the store, saying in a very controlled voice: "Easy Vincent, we won't be long. Just remain calm."

Another outburst and she hears the granddad calmly saying, "It's okay Vincent, just a couple more minutes and we will be out of here. Patience: hang in their boy."

At the checkout, the little terror is throwing items out of the cart, and once again the grandfather says in a controlled voice,

“ Vincent --- just relax. Don’t get upset. We will be home in five minutes; stay cool.”

Very impressed, the woman goes outside where the grandfather is loading his groceries and the boy in the car. She says to the elderly man, “It’s none of my business, but you were amazing in there. I don’t know how you did it. The whole time, you kept your composure, and no matter how disruptive he got, you just kept saying things to Vincent to keep him calm, telling him things would be okay. Vincent is very lucky to have you as his grandpa.”

“Thanks,” exclaims the grandfather. “But I’m Vincent – the little devil’s name is Carl.”

Patience, as most of us grew up hearing – is a virtue. And that’s the virtue Jesus is trying to teach us in his parables today.

When a farmer plants seeds --- as many are still trying to do in our neck of the woods --- it takes time for those seeds to sprout, to grow, and to mature. A farmer cannot do anything to speed up the process – the growth of a plant simply takes time – and so a farmer needs to be patient.

Likewise, a mustard seed, the smallest of all seeds on the earth, says Jesus --- once planted takes up to 40 to 50 years to become the large plant on which the birds of the sky can dwell in its shade. >>

40 to 50 years, by the way, was the average life-span of a person in Jesus' day. So again, patience needed to be exercised.

Such patience, Jesus says, is needed for the kingdom of God to break into the world. And since the kingdom of God is brought about by individuals in unity with others -- moving the world closer to the values of the Gospel and hence making the kingdom of God more present --- patience is definitely a virtue needed in the Body of Christ.

You see sometimes we get frustrated with ourselves, and definitely get frustrated with others, when we aren't being very Christ-like.

As much as we long for and want and need and pray for the kingdom of God --- we sometimes want things our way instead.

Instead of working for the common good and what's best for the body of Christ – we sometimes act very selfishly, and want to just look after our own needs.

Sometimes we get impatient – and do what we want to do, instead of taking the time to pray and reflect and ask “what does God need for me to do?”

Sometimes we are slow in offering hospitality, forgiveness, compassion and understanding --- and are very quick to criticize, judge or say –“but we’ve always done it this way before.”

And sometimes rather than embracing diversity and seeing it as a gift – the many parts working together to build up the body of Christ – we do say, “we don’t need your help or your ideas, or your enthusiasm.”

Spiritual growth takes time – and we need to be patient with ourselves and with those around us.

It’s only little by little, Sunday by Sunday, week by week, that we are transformed more and more into the image and likeness of Christ. We should never tire, though, of asking ourselves, and our faith communities ----- are we more like Christ today – then we were yesterday or last week?

Writer Kathleen Wellman says:

“For Catholics, Ordinary Time is the part of the year in which Christ, the Lamb of God, walks among us and transforms our lives. That’s why there’s nothing ordinary about ordinary time.”

Let’s use this long stretch of Ordinary Time to allow God to transform us – as individuals, and as a faith community --- more and more into the image and likeness of Jesus Christ!