

Ordinary 30 B
Mark 13: 24-32
November 15, 2009

SEE THE SIGNS!

But of that day or hour, no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. This is St. Mark's account of Jesus explaining the glorious return of the Son of Man at the end of time.

The common saying today is "God only knows". People, myself included, will use this phrase while throwing our arms in the air: God knows why people are so mean to each other; God only knows why women are from Venus and men from Mars; God knows why our son had an accident driving his car, and that was in our own garage.

While He does know all things, what is fascinating to those who choose to accept is that God is constantly trying to give us clues to what the future holds for each and every one of us.

He spoke directly through the Prophet Daniel, as we heard in the first reading, that there will be a resurrection of God's people and that some will be happy forever and the others will be in an eternity of horror and disgrace.

And it's not going to be just a numbers game as in the 144K figure that some want to believe. Daniel says that "the wise shall shine brightly and those who lead the many to justice shall be like the stars forever".

This verse from scripture is a true and direct statement that when you live the life He created for you, God will reward you with His love, eternally.

In today's gospel, Mark records that Jesus gives his disciples, and all of us, a lesson in looking at the ordinary in our lives for the direction to take for eternal happiness.

We heard how Jesus chose a common tree growing in that region as a comparison for discerning His return after His Resurrection. Even those of us who can kill a plant just looking at it know that when the branches sprout leaves, spring is here and summer is just around the corner.

I hold fast to the saying found in the gospel of Matthew where Jesus confronted the Pharisees for choosing only signs that worked for their personal good. Paraphrased it states: "Red sky at night, sailors delight; Red sky in the morning, sailors take warning!"

There are signs all around us. We need not look at every cloud in the sky to see if it is carrying our Savior to us for Final Judgment. We do need to look at all the ordinary happenings in our life each day to recognize God's presence.

Jesus urges us to recognize signs with the eyes of faith; to appreciate what a precious gift our limited time on earth really is; to realize every passing stage and that every pain and triumph are opportunities for growth, maturity and understanding of the transformation that we seek.

With every sign, with every change in direction and with every new milestone, our journey moves closer to our heavenly Father.

My personal concern is that there does not appear to be enough of us recognizing the signs God is giving. In our world today, the only signs that seem to be important to us are the stock market arrows, the percent signs behind the satisfaction of our elected officials, and the dollar signs **of the haves and haves not in the world.**

We really need to engage in more wondering and worrying about being ready for the Second coming Christ. There is way more effort spent in just trying to not think about it. I recently saw a bumper sticker that read: The end of the world is coming! Start plea bargaining.

When you try to think of the everyday signs, it is easy to list things such as: A new born baby; especially if he or she is your child or grandchild // a neighbor running into a burning house // our St. Paul youth enhancing their character and faith life in Crank's Creek ministry // and many more such as these.

There are times when we will see an extraordinary sign in an ordinary event. I'll give you an example to relate to your personal life. Several years ago, during one my many periods of self-doubt, something happened on my way to work. On a back road in the early morning I had to slam on my brakes to keep from hitting a baby deer darting in front of me. It was running to catch up with its mother that had just jumped thru an opening in a fence row that was overgrown with vegetation.

This little one missed the opening and ran straight into the fence. It was knocked off its feet/hoofs but jumped back up and tried again. Same thing happened three or four times before he was knocked back to the opening and finally hit the hole running for mom.

At that instance, I felt that the sign for me was to quit questioning the gift of the life God gave me and just keep jumping back in there until I find that opening for eternal happiness.

By our Baptism, we believe that there is an opening, a passage made for us by Jesus through His death and resurrection. And from the Sacraments He instituted for His Church, especially the Eucharist and Reconciliation, we receive the strength to never give up or give in to sin.

In preparation for the coming Advent season, remind yourself to look on the ordinary things happening around you with the eyes of faith.

Only through the eyes of faith will you see that Jesus is not up there in the clouds but standing right next to you in your journey to His Father's Kingdom.