

2nd Ordinary Sunday
January 19, 2020
“God’s Surprising Ways”

Is 49:3...6
1 Cor 1:1-3
Jn 1:29-34

My Brothers and Sisters in the Lord –

One of the things that we all must face is that our life very often takes turns that we never expected. In fact, it’s actually annoying the way that events will happen to influence the future for us. They can enable us, or even force us, to do or to begin something that never occurred to us. These include: an unexpected gift, a chance meeting, a new friend, a new job opportunity, an unwarranted criticism, a canceled air flight, and even a tragic accident. Any one of these things can be a problem or an opportunity dependent upon how we handle it.

I suspect that most of us who have lived very long know of something that made a great impact upon who and where we are today. Robert Frost once wrote:

“Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And I – I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.”

What is absolutely important to remember is that there is a unique plan and a purpose that God has for each of us. Our task is to discover that plan and respond to the overtures and the direction of God however they come!

The Chosen People were especially established by God for the Redeemer and Savior that God would send. Unfortunately, as a people and a nation, they all but failed completely. Fortunately, there were always a few who were faithful to all that God revealed and asked. Today, Isaiah tells Israel that God’s servant will be raised up from the womb to do all that God asks. He will bring salvation not only to the Chosen People but to the entire world as well.

Sadly, however, the Hebrew nation rejected Jesus when he came. They refused

to change their ideas about the kind of Messiah that God actually sent. They wanted things their way and not God's way – And, as a consequence, they suffered destruction and near annihilation for their rejection of God's servant, Jesus!

Nevertheless, the remnant, the faithful few, were open to accept Jesus when he came and accepting of what he had to say. Moreover, they were so transformed by the Gospel message that they carried it forth wherever they traveled in the, then, known world.

St. Paul was one of those whose life was irrevocably changed by what happened to him on the way to Damascus. Paul had been persecuting and arresting those who followed Jesus. Then Jesus spoke to him – and he listened and changed. As a Jewish Pharisee and a Roman citizen, Paul was the unique bridge to the Gentile world that God chose to further the message and the salvation brought by Jesus himself!

In the Gospel passage, John, the Baptist, introduces Jesus as God's son – and as the new Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. The Baptist was who and what he was because he had listened to God. At an early age, he moved from his village and into the desert for nearly 20 years. When he emerged at the Jordan River, John preached repentance and change. He prepared people's minds and hearts for the new "Way" that Jesus would bring. Then, he willingly stepped aside to allow Jesus to begin his own work and mission. Yet, and unfortunately, he was killed for his fidelity to God and to what God inspired him to teach.

Brothers and Sisters, we must always remain open to the amazing action of God in our lives. Even when we were in the womb, God had a plan for each of us. We fulfill God's purpose when we are faithful as disciples of Jesus and to the Holy Spirit that Jesus sent. But we must always remember that God uses the sometimes surprising events of our lives to shape us and the direction we take. Moreover, God sends special people to help us live in that purposeful way.

So, let us pray, today, that we remain always open to the overtures of God, however they come – May we never stray from His plan – And may we be faithful to the end!

Amen.

January 19, 2020

Msgr. Russell G. Terra