

Homily St Pius – St Anthony 5th Sunday Ordinary Time Year B

Everyone has a gift; different (and maybe wildly different) though each may be, we all have something to give and serve God with. 1 Peter 4:10 tells us that “As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God’s varied grace.” That is the beauty for me of the twelve (different) apostles or the seventy two disciples, or all of us as members of Christ’s Body. We all have different gifts, thanks be to God. And that is why Jesus calls us all. In our gospel today, Jesus is still calling together His band of followers. At least one more joins His company: **Simon’s mother in-law**. She may not be out in the streets with them, but she serves Christ right alongside Peter himself, through her domestic gifts today as she teams up with Christ and the others. I love how the gospel today gives us example of what the perfect response to Jesus is: Service! Jesus serves Simon’s mother-in-law, and she begins immediately to wait upon him; He touches her, and she wishes to share his touch with others! That is a true apostle or disciple!

Hasn’t Jesus been calling a lot of followers lately. Last two weeks, we heard about Peter Andrew, James, John and others (Philip & Nathanael). Jesus called them from their worksites in boats & on seashore, and in a way, He calls Simons mother in law **in her worksite too**, the home in Capernaum. Again, we are all called to serve Jesus in whatever way we can, in whatever place we find ourselves in; Since this is Super Bowl Sunday, I think we can say that Jesus is **forming his team!** Which by the way, will it be Kansas City, or Tampa Bay? But really, this Super Bowl Weekend, we have to keep in mind what they say about sports and prayer? We don’t pray for our team to win. We pray for the best play of both teams, and for no injuries; that’s all (if lucky ref calls and their bad day is why we win, what have we won?) I always think of that when the

big Catholic rival football game in Louisville goes on between St X and Trinity-it's high school game but it fills Papa John Stadium! But both Catholic teams pray hard to win; only one wins-the catholic joke afterward, is that one team gives thanks for intercession to Our Lady of Victory, while the other seeks comfort from Our Mother of Sorrows. But again it is game. Yet this being Super Bowl weekend, we can think about how Jesus forms the team of the Church, his disciples. He is persistently going about healing and saving, gathering up disciples **one or a few at a time**, and healing folks **one or two at a time**. Patiently and personally, Jesus gathers disciples and heals people. It makes me think of the great football player Walter Payton, he held the record, for most career yard rushed 16,726 in his lifetime playing, and that record stood until 2002, when Cowboy Emmitt Smith (18k) overtook him, but most impressive is to think of Payton's 16,726 yards run, and that his average run was 3-4 yards at a time. Only few at a time, but together 17,0000 yards!

The point is that Walter faithfully stayed at it, & built the record. And Jesus stays at it with us and He builds his team of the church, his followers, 1-2, 3-4 at a time..... but look what we have today!

What keeps us on the team or in the game? The line that jumps out at me from the gospel today, is the apostles saying to Jesus, "Everyone is looking for you" and we are, aren't we? We all seek Jesus, we look for Him who alone brings us healing, peace, and salvation. That is why we are here at mass today. That is why we belong to Him. We come to Jesus, to be fed and nourished, and given what only he can give us-belonging and purpose. And Jesus sets the example for us of what disciples do; keep focused on our work and service with him-look at all of the healing going on. But also of taking the necessary time to (keep our focus truly on him-that is prayer)-to step away, and

gain composure again, to reset and receive anew what is needed to keep on good-working..... So absolutely 'everyone is looking for you Jesus'. We are looking for him to be refreshed for more work service in His Name; and prayer (here, at home, or wherever we are) is what keeps us with Him. I like how we see prayer driving Jesus' service in the gospel today; and prayer keeping the disciples seeking Him. There is a lot of work going on in the gospel. (All the number of healings- it sounds like some kind of medical clinic gets set up at Simon's house. And even when they relocate for some rest, the crowds of the sick move with them so their clinic goes mobile and moves over to the open valley). But for any work to be fruitful it must be centered/grounded in Jesus himself, and that is seen by all the references to prayer in this reading. Our work will be refreshing if we pray before, during, and after it . Did you notice that the reading today begins with them 'leaving the synagogue'-that is praying (v 29), then at the home Jesus takes a moment to step outside/away to pray in the morning quiet (v 35), and then the passage ends by saying Jesus "went into their synagogues.... throughout the whole of Galilee"-more places of prayer (v 39). So it is Beginning, During and After--Jesus is revealing what keeps us going, what will strengthen us to persist and progress (even if only one or two steps at a time). It will be our continual 'looking for him', 'seeking him' like the crowds in the gospel, going to him time and time again. Prayer will keep us at it! Our work for Him will be fed, through our prayer rest with Him. That is our 'reset', our recharge, our renewal, time and again. We just have to keep 'seeking' Him.