

5th Sunday Ordinary Time Year “A”
February 4-5, 2017

The gloom shall become like midday.

Readings: Isaiah 58:7-10; 1 Cor. 2:1-5; Matthew 5:13-16

It typically happens just about now– the gloom of a long, dark, and cold winter takes its effect upon even the heartiest of Minnesotans. In short, it is getting old. Even our relatively mild winter has brought along with it Cabin fever, dirty cars, itchy dry skin and all that goes with it. Our Scriptures tell us that if we live virtuously, truly helping those in need, then the “light shall rise for you in the darkness, and the gloom shall become for you like midday.” There is hope in the midst of our darkness, be it physical or spiritual.

At the same time, we have already gained an hour and ten minutes of daylight since Christmas. The worst is over, but there is no question that our spirits are tied in more often than we think to non-spiritual factors such as weather, work or school.

Today though, I would like to share with you a glimpse of the midday, even while acknowledging the dark clouds that often signal trouble. Last weekend, well over 300 college students joined us for the 10:00 a.m. Mass, returning home from the National Right to Life March in Washington DC. As one now comfortably settled into middle age, I cannot tell you just how that visit bolstered my spirits and gave me hope.

I even received a beautiful thank you note from the president of the University of Mary, who invoked one of my favorite quotations about this building from Archbishop Ireland, namely “There ought to be no one who upon entering this Cathedral is not able to say, ‘It is mine.’” We do desire to be welcoming and bring people into the fold, sometimes even in ways that may seem to be a little outside of the ordinary.

Our Theology on Tap program is very successful, often with upwards of 150 young adults gathering in faith and fellowship, albeit not in a church but a restaurant. But each week of the six-week series twice per year brings timely topics to the table about living the Catholic faith in today's world.

Here at Church, each day we try to serve so many and from varied backgrounds. On any given day, those who walk through these doors are the curious, the skeptical, the rich and very poor, the troubled and those offering prayers of thanksgiving. Just two weeks ago, a man proposed to his would-be fiancé in our BVM chapel, and many seek spiritual solace through the sacrament of penance. Those struggling to find housing warm up from the cold that has become their daily existence.

It is especially challenging because I struggle with how best to help all who enter here. We see people who, usually through no fault of their own, have no understanding of proper church decorum, and welcome them as they walk through, gently suggesting that men take off their hats or suggesting they deposit their coffee in the trash. I have learned that it is best not to presume anymore, but rather to take people at face value and move forward.

Let us keep everything in perspective, spending sufficient time and effort looking for the moments of midday light in our world. There are serious challenges living the faith in a secular age, with some dark clouds looming. Yet, I refuse to be overcome by the “doom and gloom” so prevalent within society. I choose to see the good signs that are indeed around us. And when, as Isaiah prophesied, we share our bread with the hungry and shelter the homeless, the light of Christ shines just a little more brightly, if even for a moment.