

### **Week 3 - Ordinary Time – January 24, 2010**

It was a long trip home from New Zealand last week, but I got to see some beautiful country there, and the meeting I attended went very well. The International Commission on English in the Liturgy is now revising the words for events such as weddings, the Chrism Mass, and confirmation. I'm there primarily to take notes during the meeting and write up a report, which I submitted before starting my long trip home.

In the meantime, while we were in New Zealand discussing the meaning of certain words in Catholic prayers and ceremonies, terrible things were happening on the other side of the world in Haiti. A devastating earthquake has had horrible repercussions on families, food, water, homes, churches, schools, communication systems and businesses. The rest of the world wants to send help, and Catholic Relief Services can make it happen. Today's second collection will carry aid to those who are suffering so greatly.

Also this weekend you will find in your pews a set of postcards requesting justice for immigrants to our country. No one wants to support illegal activity across our borders; at the same time, our immigration system needs work. As Catholics we are asking for humane immigration policies that will keep families together and help those without legal status to begin a path toward citizenship. I encourage you to join Bishop Finn and me by signing these cards. If you leave them in the gathering space after mass, we will mail them for you.

For pro-life advocates, this has been a big week. On Friday we sorrowfully commemorated the 37<sup>th</sup> anniversary of legalized abortion in the United States. Kansas opened the trial of a man who killed a doctor specializing in late-term abortions. The man claims he did the right thing; but the Catholic Church sees this differently. We oppose taking innocent human life. The same principles that make us condemn abortion also make us condemn the killing of an abortion doctor. You do not foster respect for life when you take someone else's life. Human beings can resolve our problems without resorting to violence. We will work toward a more just society, but we will need the word of God to guide us.

Today's first reading from the Word of God is actually about reading from the Word of God. Enemies had destroyed the beautiful Temple of Jerusalem, but when God's people were freed from their exile they returned home and rebuilt the Temple. In the course of their work they discovered a scroll that had been lost, a document containing what we now recognize as the first few books of the bible. People had not heard these words in a generation. So they arranged a solemn proclamation, even constructing a special wooden platform. Ezra the scribe mounted the platform and read the word of God to the people. This passage is read at mass every time a new church is dedicated; it is always the first reading from the bible to be proclaimed from the ambo in a Catholic church. Today it reminds us that we will find guidance for a better life not in guns and violence, not in aborting away inconveniences, not by blocking

immigrants, not in ignoring the cries of the poor, but in the Word of God, which we read and hear, and by which we choose to live.