

## *2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time*

Earlier this week I spoke at the funeral of a 69-year old Baptist man who attended church with his Catholic wife. By the time I met him 24 years ago, he had already had one heart attack, and he and his wife had lost a 4-year old son to cancer. He had two more heart attacks and two more children. He started exercising regularly out of care for his family. Some people who've faced multiple tragedies become depressed, but this particular man kept up an outrageously funny sense of humor. Parents who have lost a child never get over it, but his series of heart attacks helped him focus on what matters. Given the options of sorrow or happiness, he chose happiness. He rejoiced in his family. Last week after spending a morning with his wife, he went upstairs to the exercise bike. She stayed below until she heard a thump. She ran upstairs to discover that the fourth heart attack had taken her husband instantly, his body collapsed onto the floor.

Given the options of sorrow or happiness, we can choose how to pray. We can focus on our afflictions, and indeed, Jesus taught us to ask in order to receive. But we can also focus on wondrous things that surround us. We can praise God for what goes right.

Psalm 96 takes that approach. In the responsorial today, our cantor charged us to "Sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all you lands.... bless his name. Announce his salvation, day after day." God's miracles are so pervasive that new ones blossom every day, inviting new verses to new songs of praise.

Today the Church recalls the first miracle of Jesus, the last of three traditional epiphanies: the visit of the magi, the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan, and the changing of water into wine. Because this third epiphany took place at a wedding, we also heard Isaiah's prophecy that in Israel's restoration from exile, God would call the people, "My Delight," and their land, "Espoused." "For the Lord delights in you and makes your land his spouse. As... a bridegroom rejoices in his bride so shall your God rejoice in you." Then, shaking off this intimacy, Isaiah says, "Nations shall behold your vindication, and all the kings your glory."

That's where Psalm 96 steps in. God loves us intimately and demonstrates his love publicly. Are we in trouble? Well, God has offered "salvation". Does the world seem unfair to us? Well, "God governs the peoples with equity." The refrain we sang tells us how to respond: "Proclaim his marvelous deeds to all the nations." God has done something intimately wondrous for each of us, but he expects us to let others know.

In announcing this Jubilee Year, Pope Francis listed a number of signs of hope: the desire for peace in our world, having an enthusiasm for life and a readiness to share it, clemency for prisoners, mercy to the sick, closeness to the young in their joy, welcome to migrants, esteem for the elderly, and assistance to the poor. In many ways God enters the world offering salvation and equity through the work of our hands.

We've all suffered tragedies, but we've all received blessings. As we step further into this jubilee year, let's acknowledge what God has done because of his love for us and proclaim his marvelous deeds to all the nations.