

## Second Sunday of Ordinary Time (A). Light to the Nations

I went to a Royals game and there were two boys around 9 and 11 years old sitting near me. Slugger (Royals mascot) was throwing something to the fans in the section next to us. So, the youngest boy started screaming... this way... this way... throw it to me, I need it. Slugger kept throwing to the other section and started to move further away. The young boy kept screaming... this way... this way... throw it to me, I need it. The oldest boy was probably thinking the same thing that I was thinking because he asked the youngest, do you know what he is throwing? Why do you need it? The youngest replied, "I don't know what it is, but they are getting it, so I need it".

That story reminds me of a popular phrase "keeping up with the Joneses". I don't know the Joneses, but everyone wants to keep up with them. Like the little boy, there are many times that I want things because others have it or are getting it, I might not even know how it would fit my lifestyle or what it really might be, but I want it. This is a problem our Lord has encountered and dealt with ever since the fall. *Think about the people of Israel.*

The people of Israel, were selected as the chosen people, the people of the covenant. Not because they were better than the rest, not because they were the only ones to be saved but because God had a mission for them. The book of the prophet Isaiah tells us that the people of Israel were called to **be light to the nations**, that God's salvation might reach the ends of the earth. They were called to be an example to the other nations and to serve as instruments of God's salvation. The problem was that they wanted to keep up with the Joneses, they wanted to be like the other nations, they wanted to be like the other people. Instead of being the beacon of light and guide, they wanted to emulate and follow. This was very evident in that God always wanted to be their king, and their Lord, he set judges to guide them and protect them, but they didn't want judges, they wanted a King. God wanted to be their only king and they wanted earthly kings like the other nations... they wanted to be like the other nations. They got their earthly kings, and we all know how the story ended, they were overruled, taken over and dispersed throughout the world.

**Jesus Christ** comes to the scene and his goal is to gather the dispersed, to form a selected group, a group that will have the original mission again. **To become a light to the nations, so that salvation can reach the ends of the earth.** Saint Paul states in his letter to the Corinthians that Jesus came to sanctify, to make holy. To sanctify or make holy means to separate, to consecrate for a particular purpose or mission. The group that Jesus came to call, he sanctified, he made holy with that same purpose, to be light, to be salt. This group was not called to be holy because they are better or because they are the only ones to be saved, they are called to be holy because they need to be an example to others. They need to be that light that guides, that magnet that attracts, they need to provide the blueprint to the rest of the nations as to how to live.

**In the gospel of John**, we find that Jesus goes to the Jordan river and gets baptized by John the Baptist, but why? Jesus didn't need baptism, baptism cleans our sins, makes us adopted children of God, saves us, among other things. Jesus didn't need to be cleansed of his sins, as he was sinless, he didn't need to be an adopted child of God as he is the true son of God and he didn't need to be saved as he is the one that saves, so why? There are many reasons why Jesus chose to be baptized but one of them was to serve as an example, to show us what to do, to open up the covenant and to sanctify us. Because of Jesus, baptism became the way for us to be adopted children of God, a way for us to cleanse our sins, a way for us to be sanctify, to be made holy. As adopted children of God, we go back to the original goal, we are called to be light to the nations, we are called to be examples, to attract others and bring others to Christ, the source of salvation.

Being a light to the nation is not an easy task. There are about 8 billion people in the world and out of the 8 billion, 2.2 billion declare themselves as Christians yet our world is filled with **violence, crime, pain, suffering, abuse, discrimination**, and those aspects do not seem to be improving. **The world needs Christ**, as light to the nations we are called to be those beacons bringing people to Christ. Imagine a world in which the 2.2 billion Christians were light to the nations, how bright of the world would we have... we would not eliminate all the violence, crime, pain, suffering, abuse because we live in a fallen world, but it would be a different world than what we live in.

Our Lord gave us baptism, to make us adopted children of God, to sanctify us, to make us holy, to make us light to the nations. He wants us to spread his light of salvation to the ends of the earth. We shouldn't be trying to keep up with Joneses, the Joneses should be keeping up with us. We shouldn't be wanting what others have, they should be wanting what we have.

How can I be a light to the nations?

*There was an old man that was walking down a very dark path in his neighborhood with a candle in hand. A neighbor saw him and noticed that it was his blind neighbor John, so he approached him and asked him. John, what are you doing walking down this path, when is so late, dark and... walking with a candle when you can't see? John responded, "I don't do it for me". The neighbor was confused and asked what do you mean? John went on to explain that there were many tourists in town, and they did not know their way around, by him walking down the path with a candle he was guiding others that were not familiar with the area. The light is not for me, is for them.*

We should be an example, a magnet, a guide, a light to the nations. If you don't know how to let his light shine through you, follow the psalmist who said **"Here am I, Lord; I come to do your will" ...he will take care of the rest.**