**September 29, 2019: Twenty-Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time**

When giving my presentation last week, I told this story about my Mom. While I was growing up, Mom did not need her glasses all the time as she got older. So, she had a tendency of putting them on the top of her head and then forgetting they were there. Every so often she would forget where she put them and then needed help finding them. She would call to us to help her search for her glasses. We would come into the room and see them on her head but, of course, we would not tell her. We would send her into another room to look for them while we searched the rest of the house. Generally we would be laughing but not too loudly, because we did not want her to know that we knew where they were. In time she would find them either because we couldn’t hold back the laughter, or she would simply touch the top of her head or look in a mirror. Honestly, why my Mom did not kill us at times baffles me.

This raises the question of why we so easily miss what is right in front of us. Let us be honest: what happened to Mom happens to all of us in certain ways. Just think of the guy (and let’s be honest: this is a typical guy thing), who goes to look in the fridge for something and complains that it is not there. Then, of course, someone else comes along (let’s be honest again: it’s usually a woman), moves things around a bit, and voila! it is right there. Or, even worse, the guy opens the fridge, complains that it’s not there, and of course it’s literally right in front of him.

How do we so easily become blinded to what should be easy to see? We might recognize this as a trait that we have in life, in general. I have had people tell me that they could not find something on their computer, but when I go to help, there it is facing us nose-to-nose on the screen. What causes this sense of “blindness?” I believe it is simply about perceived expectations.

We all have built-in expectations of where things should be, how things should work, what should happen in particular situations, and why things should be the way they should be. The problem is that when things do not fit into our fixed parameters, we cannot see what is right in front of us. And the problem is never oneself! It is always ‘the other’—whatever that other might be. Most of us do not like to be challenged, and so when we are hit with circumstances that challenge our comfort zone, we feel out of sorts.

What is true about life in general is also very true in our relationship with God. Most of us have preconceived notions of who God is. We have determined how God should act. We have determined what God’s expectations for us should be. We have decided how our relationship with God should work. We have decided what God’s responses should be to our reasonable expectations about life. And everything then should fit neatly into our appropriate view of things. Anything that does not—that is preventing us from achieving our set priorities for life—is an issue with the other.

The problem is that God tends to act in unexpected ways. We simply need to look to the Incarnation itself. The people had many expectations about who the Messiah would be, how He would come and what He would do. The problem is that Jesus did not meet any of those expectations. First problem: God united himself with humanity itself. In Jesus, we have one person who is both wholly and completely 100% God and wholly and completely 100% human. Second problem: He was born to an extremely poor family with no worldly connections at all. Third problem: He had no worldly powers that would alleviate Israel’s suffering and free them from the Roman yoke.

Instead, Jesus came and fulfilled all the prophecies predicted about Him, but again, what was right in front of them—foretold in the scriptures—they could not see. It did not meet their expectations of what God should do—how He should act. Christ did proclaim freedom, but it was about true freedom that frees us from sin. It is a freedom that is not determined by exterior forces. It is a freedom centered in our relationship with God. Christ came to create God’s kingdom on Earth, but it was not a worldly kingdom. The Kingdom of God is found only through a real relationship with Christ. Christ came to show what true unconditional love is. It is found in the cross. The love we are called to live is not centered in how we feel, but in how we live and act towards others. It is about dying to oneself and putting the other first. It is about kenosis, or self-emptying. It is about emptying oneself of all that is not truly about God. The Messiah they received was not the Messiah they wanted, but it was the Messiah they needed.
At times, we all struggle to see God in our lives, but the reality is that God is always right there. He is always with us. The simple reason we do not see Him is that He does not meet our expectations. We simply need to be willing to move/remove a few things from our lives and we will find Him.

If you have any questions about anything, please do not hesitate to ask me directly, or send your questions to me at fr.brian@chelmsfordcatholic.org.

Please keep me in your prayers.

In Christ,

Fr. Brian