

January 20, 2008 Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

(Deacon Pat Hall)

Homilies are aids to encountering the living Word.

Please read the scripture passages that this homily hopes to embrace.

Isaiah 49:3, 5-6; 1 Corinthians 1:1-3; John 1:29-34

The readings can be found at: <http://www.usccb.org/nab/012008.shtml>

“Behold the Lamb of God”

What if in the middle of this mass Bishop Murray was to come walking down the aisle?
Some of you may not know him by sight, but the finger-pointing and whispers would soon satisfy your curiosity.

But then, why would he be here?

He would certainly command attention.

What if it wasn't Bishop Murray, but Pope Benedict,
or how about Governor Granholm or President Bush?

What if they stopped right in front of you and offered their hand in greeting?
Scary? Exciting?

For me as a kid, it was Santa Claus.

I was glued to our black and white TV every Thanksgiving for the Detroit Santa Claus parade.

I was bored by the floats and the bands and I would keep asking my mom,
“When's Santa coming? When's Santa coming?”

Then of course he'd be bringing up the rear with his sleigh and reindeer.

I got so excited.

Santa bounded up the steps to Hudson's entrance to his magic castle and received the key to the city from the mayor and then, poof, it would be over.

For me, that was something to behold.

Where in your life did you experience that big “behold” moment?

For my niece it was at a Hanna Montana concert.

For someone else, maybe it was a famous hero.

For you, maybe it was the first sight of that guy or gal you had a crush on.

For some parents maybe it was the first time that they laid eyes on their newborn.

Among all this excitement, there might be an element of fear upon encountering that big person.

Am I dressed OK, what do I look like? What do I say?

Can I *really* be a father or mother to this helpless little baby?

Is this the kind of fear that we are asked to experience when we are told to “Fear the Lord”?

When Mary beheld the Angel Gabriel at the annunciation
and the disciples beheld the risen Jesus, they were told, "*Be not be afraid.*"
Our language can be clumsy and confusing yet maybe it's just vague enough to hold in
tension: "Fear the Lord" and "Do not be afraid."

Where does this fear come from?
This may be the fear born from the distance between us.
It may include a sense of unworthiness or smallness.
We pray: "Lord, I am not worthy to receive you, but only say the word and I shall be
healed." ...only say the word...
Guess what? Jesus is saying the word.
You *are* to be healed.
You no longer need to fear.

A homily of Fr. Ken's a while back told us that we have the right to expect an encounter
with God at every mass.
I don't expect that.
I expect good praise and worship music.
I expect a good homily from Fr. Ken or Fr. Fitz.
I expect the collection baskets to go round and round.
But to expect a real encounter with God at *any* mass, let alone *every* mass?
That's kind of scary.
How about not? I'm really not up to it.
I am carrying a little too much baggage for that kind of thing.

But Jesus wants us to encounter him,
to have a relationship with him,
to allow ourselves to be loved by him,
to allow ourselves to be served by him.

Jesus grew up with the same Isaiah scripture we heard today.
Today's is the second of the four Songs of the Suffering Servant,
the first of which you heard last week.
Jesus claims the image for himself.
He is to raise us up and restore us to a loving relationship
so that we can be a light to others
and share in God's salvation.

When Fr. Ken calls us to "Behold the Lamb of God"
this is the same Jesus
of whom John the Baptist said "takes away the sin of the world".
This can be intimidating, but we are called to be "happy"
as we *are* being "called to his supper."

And after our experience here today, after we've received communion and gone out to
love and serve, can we, as John the Baptist did,
say that *we have seen* and *testify that Jesus is the Son of God?*