

## Second Sunday of Ordinary Time – Year A

Two of the more exciting and interesting characters I came to know and watch as a child were Batman and Robin. In an instant Bruce Wayne and Dick Ward became Batman and Robin, the saviors of Gotham City. For years these crime fighters were featured in comic books. Their greatest claim to fame, however, came through the magic of television. Do you remember their TV show? There was the Bat Cave, the Bat Mobile, Commissioner Gordon, and Alfred the Butler. One thing I will never forget about that show were the exclamations posted on the TV screen – like “BAM!” “SOCK!” “POW!”, etc. And one of the other more memorable exclamations came from the lips of Batman and Robin themselves, namely “Holy whatever.” For example, if they were dealing with the Penguin, they would say, “Holy Umbrella.” Suffice to say, there were many words they used after “Holy.”

Long before Batman and Robin made the word “holy” famous, it appeared in the Scriptures. In today’s second reading from St. Paul’s letter to the Corinthians, we hear this word. For St. Paul writes, “Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, to the Church of God that is in Corinth, to you who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be holy, with all those everywhere who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours.”

What’s most striking about this introduction from the pen of Paul is the phrase of, “Called to be Holy.” It is a phrase ascribed to Paul and those everywhere who call upon the name of Lord Jesus Christ.

In the early 1960’s the Church reiterated this call to holiness during the Second Vatican Council. In fact, in the document in the Church, otherwise known as *Lumen Gentium* there is an entire chapter devoted to the call to holiness. The council stated that the Church is held to be “unfailingly holy.” And all are called to holiness which is seen as both an invitation and obligation.

But how does one become holy? In this present world, how does one embrace holiness? The Vatican II document gives some insight to this question when it states:

“Accordingly all Christians, in the conditions, duties, and circumstances of their life and through all these, will sanctify themselves more and more if they receive all things with faith from the hand of the heavenly Father and cooperate with the divine will, thus showing faith in that temporal service the love with which God has loved the world.”

From this document – it is evident that there are two keys to holiness. The first one is FAITH. Faith is of course a trusting surrender to God. A disposition of faith is analogous to riding in a car and leaving the driving to God.

The second key to holiness is cooperation with God’s will. In this season of Ordinary Time we are reminded about God’s plan for us which is revealed in his will.

This plan is often called a vocation, and God has a vocation – a will – for all of us. The challenge isn’t always in doing that will as much as it is in discerning that will. For this process of coming to know God’s will involves prayer, particularly silence, stillness, and patience. All of these realities are hard to embrace in our everyday world. When we fail to be silent, still, and patient we not only fall short in being holy, but we also set ourselves up for misery. In fact, Pascal once said, “All the miseries of mankind arise from man’s inability to sit still in his own room.”

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Holiness demands that we take time each day to listen to God's will, which often leads us to the cross. And none of us can expect to be holy without being plunged at some point into the mystery of suffering. That's why the church in her infinite wisdom has always looked at the cross, not just as a piece of wood but as the holy cross.

The call to holiness, then, is one of faithful surrender to God's will that inevitably takes us to Calvary. The good news, however, is that we are never alone in as much as we journey together. For Paul in his greeting states that he is called to be holy, "With all those everywhere who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."