

## 25<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time

September 24, 2006

*Wis 2-12, 17-20; Jas 3:16-4:3; Mk 9:30-37*

Homilist: *Sister Catherine Marie Bazar*

Almost everyday in my ministry as a jail chaplain, I observe an inmate being maligned and persecuted by a group of other inmates simply because she is more educated, or perhaps just plain courteous, or even prettier than those who single her out. If they could just strip her down to their level, then they feel secure and in control. Sometimes she is tortured to the breaking point, and in that environment there is rarely anyone who will come to her rescue. This is where our work as chaplains often starts the day.

There is such an echo of this in our three Readings for this Sunday that one almost has to wonder if being just and righteous, or truthful and humble, or delicate and refined, or small and vulnerable automatically spells shame and ridicule.

In this same mindset, we observe in the First Reading and the Gospel account that there is also never just one maligner. Wisdom speaks of the “wicked mob” who taunt (*let us see. . .let us condemn*). Jesus cautions that He will be handed “*over to men*” who will kill Him. Evil of these magnitudes seems to travel in groups where limitations or brokenness can be lumped together to form a power base.

Looking at our society today, we can see very obvious examples of the unleashing of evil upon the vulnerable. Witness the abused spouse, the exploitation of children, the violence wreaked upon the innocent in our schoolyards, neighborhoods, and cities. Then there are the more subtle and sophisticated forms of violence: large corporations taking advantage of voiceless employees; or governments rationalizing the withdrawal of needed social programs for the sake of victory over designated “enemies” because “we must stay the course.”

St James asks us, “Where do the wars and where do the conflicts among you come from?” He directs the answer to human passions, or, in modern terminology, the unleashing of those inordinate and unresolved programs for happiness ingrained in the human condition – power, prestige, and possessions over others.

Finally, there is Jesus, the Divine Antidote, who nips the bud right at its source even as His followers bicker over leadership roles. Taking a child – small, helpless, trusting, receptive, delicate, unschooled, unpretentious (all the ingredients for trouble in its life), He does a simple thing. He bends clear down and wraps the child in His arms, thereby not only affirming the goodness and potential of its human life but also fortifying its self-esteem by planting the seed for future growth and development. Imagine keeping alive that childlike purity of a gaze that looks back with such trust and welcome! Yet Jesus tells us that it is here, in this guileless mindset, that He is to be found among us who can be so busy with our agendas for recognition.

Would that all people could greet one another with a holy embrace, acknowledging, accepting, and renewing each other’s basic goodness and bowing to the Divine within. Then there would be no need for domination over others, whether they are individuals, neighbors, employees, citizens, or nations.

*“To look deeply into another’s eyes  
risks that they will look deeply into you.”*

*Drew Leder*