

HOMILY – 2ND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME “B” 1-14-18

“Come and see.” This invitation of Jesus is in response to a question asked of him by two disciples: “Where are you staying?” They had just been introduced to Jesus by John the Baptist and they were curious to know more about him. Who was he, why did John point him out, what was he doing to attract so much attention? They accepted the invitation and they began to follow him.

As I reflected on these words “Come and see” I was reminded of a commercial that I have seen several times. It is about a product, a medicine that is used to help with acne, skin blotches, and skin discoloration. It shows the faces of several people and each one looks into the camera and says: “See me”. It is a clever way of saying, don’t see my acne and blotches, but see me for the person I am.

Each time we gather for liturgy, we pretty much come through the same doors, we are greeted by friendly ushers, we sit in our preferred pews, we say the same prayers, sing the same hymns and we go back to our cars and go home. But do we really see each other?

I am convinced that within any parish there is a hidden plea by many people to be seen. It might be the elderly individual or couple who suddenly finds themselves living on a fixed income for the first time in their life. They may be experiencing chronic health issues that now keep them from engaging in activities they once enjoyed doing. Because of that, they feel less a part of the life of the parish. They may not hear as well and may not appear to be fully engaged in the liturgy. They would enjoy going to more parish activities but they don’t feel comfortable driving at night or when the roads are wet and icy. “See me” and don’t forget me.

I think of the young teens that we might not often see at Mass. They might not go because no one from their family takes them. Their life at home might not be easy. Their parents may not be talking, they may be divorced, and they may have only a single parent. They may be bullied at school and have very few friends. They face the daily temptations to self-medicate with drugs and alcohol or unhealthy relationships. They are hungry for attention and love and maybe wonder: does the church understand my world? “See me!”

I look at the young parents with young children who want to be at Sunday Mass. But it is not easy to wake the children up, feed them, dress them, get them all buckled up in the car, arbitrate their battles and get them to settle down during Mass. These parents really want this prayer time with God but the distractions with the children are great. They often wonder if all the effort to get there is worth it and wonder if they just should have stayed home. Some people look at them and suggest by their body language that maybe they should have stayed home. But they say: “See me and welcome me.”

“Come and see” is for me a pastoral invitation and call to know better the struggles of our community. “Come and see” how we can welcome all, lift their burdens and see the Christ that is in everyone. The Church is where we can come together, support each

other, and celebrate that God loves us as we are and where we are. Where is God staying? Look at the persons next to you and around you. See them! It is that person or persons that God looks at with tenderness and says: "You are mine."

Closing Story 1-14-18

As you may have known, I was away all week at a workshop/retreat for this preaching academy that I am trying to learn from. Before leaving I sent a thought for the week to our staff so I put this little story in. It was about a priest that was really conscientious and wanted to do everything well for his liturgies. This was a long time ago - a lot of these young kids will not understand these two words that I am about to say. He had a tape recorder...(you can ask your parents about that, alright). Well, it was a tape recorder and so he had the whole service taped and then he went home at the end of the long day and sat down in his chair to play it. He put it on and he said, "Oh man, Brad's choir was brilliant today, they sang so beautifully, the opening hymn. And the lectors," he said, "Boy were they good, they really proclaimed the word well." And then he kept listening and then for a half hour he fell asleep. He woke up at the end of his homily and realized that he needed to work on that.