

33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time 2022 C

For over 20 years, day and night, less the months of COVID and a few technical glitches, the water you see and hear in the Baptismal font of Sacred Heart has been flowing down its sides. In those years, it would be hard to see any obvious erosion of that bronze bowl; but very slowly, rough edges are smoothed out and the font is changed, little by little. ***Even a small stream of water has great power, over time, to bring about remarkable change.*** From something as dramatic as canyons and the work of glaciers, to something as familiar as potholes and ruts in our driveways, ***water and time together can do incredible things.*** Occasionally, flash floods can cause instant results; just as God can overwhelm us with moments of powerful conversion. But most often, grace works like that slow, small stream, smoothing out rough edges and etching ever deeper channels over time.

The dramatic portrait Jesus paints of the end of the age can distract us, even unsettle us – but the core lesson here is ***perseverance*** ... the patient, persistent following of the Lord over time, doing our own orderly, quiet, even small, work for the Kingdom. ***In every age of the Church, there have been those who proclaim the end of the world is at hand***, and they are certainly not lacking in our own day, given an extra boost from social media and a regrettable lack of perspective. But God gets to decide when time will end, no one else. ***The message of the Gospel is not one of fear, anxiety, and panic, but of assurance and peace through knowing and serving the Redeemer of the world, as we wait in joyful hope for the coming of our Savior – calmly, patiently, with persevering trust.***

The Scriptures are full of stories of people walking away. Think of the accusers of the woman caught in adultery, who drifted away when Jesus wrote on the ground, thinking they were avoiding judgment while in fact they only lost the chance to see that the judgment Jesus passes is mercy and a new beginning. The rich young man is excited by Jesus, but walks away sad when he is told to sell all that he has and then come back and follow. John tells us that many in the crowd walked away from Jesus when He called

Himself the Bread of Life, and He asked the Twelve, “Do you want to leave Me, too?” They stayed then, but they did flee in fear at the Cross, an understandable human reaction that is still played out often enough in our lives, when the demands of being a disciple seem too much for us and trust in God’s future seems empty compared to our own strength right at hand.

What can make us stay like Mary Magdalene, sitting by an empty tomb until she sees the risen Jesus? To persevere, to wait in hope like hers, is not a matter of stubbornness, clinging to an idea or a set of customs and rituals – *staying is the fruit of love*. We see this in the life of families, where love is at the heart of life together. Family life is not always easy or painless; it involves sacrifice, tension, sometimes suffering and sadness. But it is beautiful to observe, a living lesson in love, where the most fundamental lessons about God, life, and mercy are learned. There, too, rough edges are smoothed out and growth and change happen slowly. To stay with Jesus: that is our hope and our anchor, our certainty in the midst of a hurried and uncertain world. For He always listens to us, loves us, and stays with us, above all in the Eucharist.

Pause for a moment with me and listen to the font. ... // ... *Water in action as the slow but sure agent of change reminds us that we too must be patient and persevere – not necessarily doing dramatic and remarkable things, and not seeking remarkable results; but doing even simple things with remarkable *faith**. For the waters of Baptism are always at work in us, smoothing out the rough edges. The things of the world, both joys and sorrows, will pass away; but Jesus is the same, yesterday, today, and forever.