

4th Thursday in Ordinary Time, Cycle I
January 27, 2011 12:30 PM
Fr. Joe Bambenek
St Anthony Shrine, Boston

Hebrews 10:19-25

Psalm 24

Mark 4:21-25

“We must consider how to rouse one another to love and good works.”

In today’s first reading we are instructed by the Apostle Paul that our life as a Christian is more than just about me and my personal relationship with Jesus. Such a relationship is fundamental and is essential, but it is not everything. In addition to a personal relationship with God, this is an AND, not an OR, as Christians we are to consciously act to support one another in building our relationship with God; we are to cultivate in others the theological virtues of faith, hope and love. We are to encourage each other and to rouse each other to goodness and holiness.

How do we do this? We can encourage one another by our words. We can encourage one another by our actions. We can encourage one another by the witness of how we live our lives. St. Anthony’s is a shining example of doing this: through both the frequent opportunities for Mass and confessions, but also for the great ministry that is done here.

Many of you may not recognize who I am. My name is Fr. Joe Bambenek, and I am a newly-ordained priest of the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis, actually I was ordained last May. I am here for a mini “Mass of Thanksgiving” for my ordination, as I had been in the pews of St. Anthony’s for literally hundreds of daily Masses when I was a grad student at MIT 15 years ago. The story of how I got from out there to up here would take too long for a homily at a noontime St. Anthony’s Mass. Today I return here, in the new role, with a simple message: God has a plan for your life. Undoubtedly, many of you are living it. God has created most of us to live our lives as parents, spouses, employees, building up the kingdom on Earth by rousing one another to love and good works, in daily ordinary lives. I come here to encourage you to persevere in the face of the challenges of life in the workplace; of the many difficulties of marriage and parenthood. Yet there are undoubtedly some here who, for a variety of reasons, are not yet fulfilling God’s call in your life. Perhaps because of fear; or, perhaps God has not yet seemed to give direction; or perhaps because God’s direction has not even been sought. If nothing else, hopefully the smile that has been pretty much constantly on my face during these 8 months as a priest encourages you and serves as a witness of the joy that occurs when we overcome our fears and trust Him to guide us in our lives.

As we prepare to receive Jesus in the Eucharist, and then carry Him within us as we return to our jobs, to our homes, or wherever we are going, let us ask ourselves a challenging question: will we be taking Jesus this afternoon, and this evening, to where He wants to go with us, doing what He is calling us to do?

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