

**Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (7/29/07)**

Father Frank's corner will resume next week.

**Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (7/22/07)**

This weekend I am celebrating Mike and Abby Kilcoyne's wedding in Skaneateles, New York (one of the Finger Lakes). Please say a prayer of blessing for them. They will return to us on July 30. I will return on Friday, July 27, and hope to be able to give an update on our moving by then.

## **Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (7/15/07)**

Critics often blame religion for the bad things people do. The fact is, most religions help people be better human beings. But bad people sometimes make use of religious material taken out of context or not fully understood to justify less-than-human behavior. Terrorists who commit atrocities in the name of Islam are modern examples. However, ever since sin entered the world humans have made judgments about others, dividing people between insiders or outsiders. Insiders deserve my compassion and my help, outsiders don't. At the time of Jesus, the Jewish people divided people between "Jews" and "Gentiles." Even some of their closest tribal relatives, the Samaritans, were considered outsiders. Jesus tries to break down this sinful exclusivity and expand our relationships to include all who are in need. In a life-altering parable named "The Good Samaritan" Jesus teaches us that all barriers are sinful. There is no longer "us" and "them" Divisions. It is all "us." Even 2,000 years later we have enormous difficulty accepting this. Just this year in the debate on immigration reform we have heard incredible vitriolic statements. It's one thing to debate how we handle the illegal immigration issue in a comprehensive way. But it's another thing to use dehumanizing language in talking about the "outsiders." The lesson from Jesus is to see "illegal immigrants" as our brothers and sisters, our neighbors. And then we can talk about how we help them become legal, just as we would wish the best for our own family members. Whenever I find myself becoming exclusive and judgmental about others, I try to remember those other life-disturbing words of Jesus, "the measure you measure with will be measured back to you." In God's eyes we are all "illegal" because we have all broken God's laws. If we want God's mercy, we first need to be merciful to others. May God forgive our illegalities!

### **Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (7/8/07)**

“The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few.” (Lk. 10:2). Jesus is about to send his disciples-in-training out on their own for the first time and he reminds them that they are involved in God’s harvest. This is like a last minute pep talk from the coach to remind the players that what they do IS important RIGHT NOW. The disciples still have much to learn but they are still able to do incredible things because they are doing them in the name and power of the Lord. Last week we heard about God’s invitation to all of us to be committed fully in his work. Today we get a glimpse of what God can accomplish through us when we agree to be workers in the harvest. One of the weaknesses of Catholicism post Trident was the assumed segregation of work for the Lord between clergy and laity. The lack of education was a major contributing factor to this incomplete understanding. Post Vatican II we are aware that each of us is called to work for the Lord with whatever talents God gives us and wherever we are in our pilgrimage of life. Right here, right now, God calls us to work for his harvest, whether as clergy (and we need to pray for more vocations) or as lay people. We can have enormous effects in this world just by realizing that our ordinary everyday work is for the Lord’s Kingdom. Let us rejoice and let us work!

### **Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (7/1/07)**

Today's readings remind us of God's call to each of us. We are all called to serve God but not all in the same capacity. Not all of us are called to be major prophets, but all of us are called to profess God's teachings in our lives. The readings do challenge us to realize that our calling by God requires total response. We can't be looking back or thinking about our former way of life once we have started on the road of discipleship. "No one who sets a hand to the plow and looks to what was left behind is fit for the kingdom of God." (Lk. 9:62). It is similar to the commitment of marriage; anyone who keeps thinking about people they dated before their marriage is not focusing on their commitment to their spouse, they are trying to hedge their bets. But with God there can be no hedging. We are asked to freely make our commitment as soon in life as possible, and then to continually renew and strengthen that commitment through our encounters with trials along the journey of life. **GOD IS AND WILL BE WITH US!**