

**Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time – Year C  
(Jan. 28, 2007)**

**Called by God**

Sometimes, you know, it's good for us just to take a little time out to ask ourselves, "Why do we come here every Sunday? What is it that draws us? What happens while we are here and what effect does it have in our lives?" As you know, here at Holy Trinity this year has been designated as "A Year of Prayer at the Eucharist." Our purpose in doing this is to help us pray better at the Eucharist and so be more open to the grace of God.

What is it that draws us to this church every week? You probably could give me several answers to that but have you ever thought that ultimately, ultimately, it's God who draws us here because to come here is a grace and only God can give us that grace. God calls us and we come. You may also come because you like the liturgy here or the preaching or the music or just because you like the Jesuits. And believe it or not, that's a grace, too. Some people might say it takes a lot of grace to be able to like the Jesuits. Whatever the case may be, God calls us and we come. We respond to God's call.

What happens when we get here? We gather, we greet one another, we sing a hymn, we praise our God, and then we sit. We sit to listen attentively to what God has to say to us today. An author I read recently puts it this way:

We come to the moment when the assembly sits and the reader stands with the book open. It happens every Sunday, but it should still be each time a moment of delight for us. Wherever we come from that morning, whatever the troubles, whatever the aches and pains, whatever the worries, whatever the preoccupations, somehow they all get caught up into the troubles, aches and pains, delights and preoccupations that are sitting beside and behind and around each one of us. The church is filled with such things.

And it is a church that is about to listen to its book. What kind of a church is going to listen well to its book? One with no worries? Or one full of the struggles of everyday life? The truth is this: we who come here are

hungry individuals, needy people, and when we are all together, we are a hungry church. The words of this book are our food and drink. We sit down, the reader opens the book, and the church is nourished.

How is the church nourished? First of all we recognize that God has called us together to be community, to be as we heard last week the Body of Christ. We listen to the readings from Scripture and we know that it is God who is speaking to us. In today's readings God is challenging us to live up to our call to be members of the Body of Christ to love with the love that Paul describes in our second reading – in other words to be Christ for the world. This is not very different from the call of Jeremiah to be a prophet whose work was to proclaim the love of God and the responsibilities that we all have in responding to that love.

Last week we heard how the congregation was nourished in that Nazareth synagogue. Jesus is full of the spirit. He stands in continuity with the past by reading from Isaiah, and he gives the people assurance that God has been faithful to God's promises, that in him what the prophet had said hundreds of years before has come to pass. His mission, his program, his vocation will be to do what the prophet says: bring good news to the poor, proclaim liberty to captives, give sight to the blind, release prisoners, announce a year of favor from the Lord. A year of favor is the Jubilee year when debts were forgiven, enemies were reconciled, and there was a new start for everyone. His words were words of encouragement for the people, words of compassion, of understanding and love. And of course he did not just talk about it. He went out and did it.

And since we are the Body of Christ, we have a responsibility to do those same things. Those actions that we heard in the Gospel which describe Christ's mission, describe ours as well. That should make us pause and ponder – ponder: how do we as a local church embody those aspects of Jesus' ministry? How do we understand the history of the Jewish people as our heritage, too? How does our mission in terms of where we spend our time, energy, and money extend beyond the walls of our church? How would we act if we saw ourselves, as Luke has Jesus do, as the fulfillment of God's promises to the world because if we are the Body of Christ, that is what we are: the fulfillment of God's promises to the world.

How then, concretely speaking, can we be the fulfillment of God's

promises to the world? When as mother and fathers we raise our children with love, giving them good example and teaching them to love one another and to spread that love beyond the family, we are the fulfillment of God's promises to the world.

When we welcome strangers and make them feel comfortable and at home in our midst we are the fulfillment of God's promises to the world.

When we give food and clothing to the hungry and homeless who come to us for help, when we offer them words of encouragement and hope and aid them in the difficult task of getting their lives in order, we are the fulfillment of God's promises to the world.

St. Augustine has a beautiful passage which links what we are contemplating here with what will follow: the celebration of the Eucharist. He says: If therefore you are the body of Christ and his members, your mystery has been placed on the Lord's table. You receive your mystery in Holy Communion. You reply "Amen" to that which you are, and by replying you consent. For you hear, "The body of Christ," and you reply "Amen." Be a member of the body of Christ, says St. Augustine, so that your "Amen" may be true.