Second Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A, Jan.15, 2017

Isaiah 49:3,5-6

Psalm 40

1 Corinthians 1;1-3

John 1:29-34

Do you know how special you are?

How special, singular, exceptional, distinctive, extraordinary, and unusual you are?

Yes, you are. Because you are religious. You have a religion. You are one dimension above spiritual. And many dimensions above the lost and aimless.

You have accepted faith; live in hope; and work it all out in charity all in the name of religion.

What do our readings for today call you – you who are religious? The servant of God, the glory of the Lord, formed in the womb by God, glorious in the sight of God, a light to the nations, an apostle of Jesus Christ, sanctified in Christ Jesus, with a new song in your mouth, and a sharer in the Holy Spirit.

Wow! That’s a lot to put on your resume. But it’s true.

Anybody can be spiritual if they seek out wisdom and live by it. All that is good, very good. But you are one dimension above.

Who me? Just because I put an envelope in the collection basket when I come to Mass?

Yep.

I like to make gingerbread houses. With my own recipe for the dough, I take the things of the earth; mix them and make of them something special – gingerbread dough. I can liken that to being spiritual –searching out those things that can make something special for me. I take it many steps further, however. I roll out the dough. I carve it up. I glue the pieces together. Bake it. And put icing and candies on it. And walla, a gingerbread house. It now has structure. It now has a place in the world that makes a difference. It has a foundation. It is stable. It is a wonder that other people wonder at.

Now gingerbread houses are not my religion.

The Roman Catholic Church is my religion. It has a spirituality but it has more because it has foundation and form and wonder.

Many people can live without religion. To some, religion is only rules and regulations with a god you only wind up on Sundays. They are missing the point.

Sure we have discipline. So do the Navy Seals. Sure we have rules. So does Robert’s Rules of Order. Sure we have bishops and a pope and dioceses and parishes. As Americans we have a president and senators and congressmen. What’s the big deal? With religion we have order and style and leaders who are brothers and sisters with special talents and gifts. With religion we have a community, a society, an organization that gathers under one roof. With religion we have “Blue Teams”. We don’t have a god that we wind up on Sundays. We have the God who winds us up every time we enter a church.

And when I walk in under this one roof I have people who are brothers and sisters who share the faith and bolster my weakness, and console me when I’m hurting and forgives me my sins, and feeds me with the Good News and the presence of my God who comes to me in another dimension of reality and loves me to death and beyond.

I am proud to be a person who believes and practices the religion of the Roman Catholic Church.

My God, where else can I be called special, singular, exceptional, distinctive, extraordinary, and unusual? And by my God be called the servant of God, the glory of the Lord, formed in the womb by God, glorious in the sight of God, a light to the nations, an apostle of Jesus Christ, sanctified in Christ Jesus, with a new song in my mouth, and a sharer in the Holy Spirit?

And with all that, I have a religion that stands behind me so I can testify to the world that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Alleluia! Thank God I am a person who is religious. I have accepted a religion. And I am blessed.