



Twenty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time August 28, 2011 A

Celebrating Fifty Years of Catholic Education at Ascension

I am grateful to Sr. Joseph Barden, principal of our school for 30 years, for the following account of significant events in the history of our school.

- The 1960's heralded the dawn of the Space Program at Cape Canaveral. Many young scientists and other professionals flocked to Florida's Space Coast to work in the Space Program. Many of them were Catholic seeking a Church and a Catholic school for their children.
 - Archbishop Hurley of St. Augustine Diocese appointed Fr. Martin Power as pastor of the newly established parish in what was then called Eau Gallie.
 - In 1961 Fr. Power went to Ireland looking for Sisters to staff his new school. He found three sisters willing to embark on this new venture at the Convent of Mercy, Ardee, County Louth. They were: Sister Monica Ryan, Sister Immaculata Knox, and Sister Assumpta Finn.
 - The Sisters and lay teachers opened Ascension Catholic School on September 8, 1961 with grades K-5, and each classroom was filled to capacity with eager students. The school was sparsely furnished with just chairs for the teachers and students, and books piled in stacks on the floor. No desks, shelves, closets or other supplies were yet available.
 - Volunteer parents and parishioners supported the school in every way, working diligently to provide the necessary furniture and supplies for the school. The teachers and sisters worked overtime to ensure that the curriculum was not only being covered, but that additional programs were gradually added to enhance learning.
 - Ascension School graduated its first eighth grade graduates in 1965.
 - Soon the hard work paid off and the school became known throughout the parish and county for its standards of excellence in learning. This trend has continued throughout the years and down to the present day.
- In 1973 Ascension School received its first Accreditation from the F.C.C.
 - In 1986 Ascension School was designated as a School of Excellence by the U.S. Dept. Of Education, and in 2003 was again designated as a Blue Ribbon School.
 - The demand for Catholic education at our school became apparent when we had long waiting lists for all classes, especially in the Early Childhood Department. So in 1992 the first phase of a new school was completed and dedicated. Phase 11 of the new building was completed in 1997 providing us with a state-of-the-art facility to accommodate two classes of each grade PK-8, cafeteria and kitchen, art and music rooms, science lab, expanded library/media center and technology lab, guidance room and office spaces for the administrators .
 - A school gymnasium was built and dedicated in 2003 to serve all students for physical education classes as well as intramural games and assemblies.
 - In the year 2000 the Development Office was established to help provide funding, from sources other than tuition, for present and future needs of the school. An Endowment Fund was established, and each year funds are raised to enhance and build up this fund.
 - We are very proud of the many awards won by our school and our students, and below I will mention but a few of those won at regional, state and national levels:
 - ◊ Many regional and state awards in Science
 - ◊ Copious amounts of regional and state awards in American History Essays and D.A.R. competitions
 - ◊ Hundreds of regional and state awards in Music—vocal and instrumental, individual, duets and trios
 - ◊ Regional and national awards in Odyssey of the Mind competition

- ◊ State awards in Future City Engineering and Lego League Robotics
- ◊ National awards in Accelerated Reading Program
- ◊ County and state awards in Art
- Students are in top 10% of the nation in national testing programs
- A School Mass is celebrated for all teachers and students each Wednesday, and every class in turn, grades 1-8, prepares the liturgy with their teachers. Students sing the hymns under the direction of the Music teacher and play a variety of musical instruments to accompany the hymns. This Mass is well- attended by parents, families and friends of the students. Children bring up non-perishable food items in the offertory procession for the food pantry each week.
- Teachers and staff members are well-qualified and state certified in their particular fields. They are truly dedicated to the teaching mission of the Church and volunteer many extra hours each week in serving the children after school and on weekends to lead students in clubs and competitions. We are all proud of what they do for the children of Ascension.
- Hundreds of our graduates have gone on to excel in all areas of life and have brought great honor to the school. Among those, many have spent years in the service of their country while others have spent time serving the poor and needy as lay missionaries.

This year we have 497 students in our school.

Golden Jubilee Committee. A big thank you to the following people who made up our Golden Jubilee Committee: Anita Kealer, Chairperson, Anita Brady, Joyce Wilkins, Kathi Parsons, Pat Egolf, Carmela Falcone, Mr. Doug Workman, Sr. Immaculata, Sr. Joseph.

Fire in the Belly

Today's first reading is an excerpt from what scholars often call the "confessions of Jeremiah." These "confessions" are not a list of his sins, but rather a glimpse into his *anguished conversations with God* about what he is thinking and feeling in his heart.

Jeremiah describes his call by God as a form of "divine seduction." "*You duped (or seduced) me, O Lord, and allowed myself to be duped.*" If we go back to chapter one of the Book of Jeremiah, we will see that Jeremiah tries to say "no" when God calls him to be a prophet. "*O God, I'm but a child.*" Jeremiah is telling God: "I'm

just a kid, you really don't want me for such an important position!" But God prevails saying: "I'll give you the words to speak." Jeremiah replies: "You are too strong for me, and you triumph." Perhaps the biggest daily challenge in the spiritual life is surrender to God, allowing him to have his way with us.

We then discover that Jeremiah is ready to quit his vocation as prophet. Why? Because all too often, the word he had to speak was one that the people, especially the leaders, did not want to hear. (In this case, he is telling the leaders to quit resisting the Babylonians who are attacking Jerusalem. "*Quit before there is more loss of life.*") Because his words are not what the people want to hear, Jeremiah becomes the object of their scorn and mockery. "*All day long I am the object of laughter, everyone mocks me.*" Then he adds: "*The word of the Lord has brought derision and reproach all the day long.*" Being a sensitive soul, Jeremiah finds the peoples' mean and nasty words too much to bear. So inwardly he considers quitting. "*I say to myself, I will not mention him, I will speak his name no more.*" Wow! Here we have one of God's greatest prophets seriously considering turning his back on God. How consoling for those of us who may have similar thoughts.

But then Jeremiah shares with us something very powerful and beautiful. He confesses that, try as he may, he cannot quit on God because God's word is "*like a fire burning in my heart, imprisoned in my bones. I grow weary holding it in, I cannot endure it.*" Jeremiah is telling us that when God touches us in the depths of our being, we really can't quit on him. God's touch is like a fire that cannot be extinguished. We may become angry at God or discouraged with him (Jeremiah experienced both) but we really can't quit. God's seduction of our soul can't be easily tossed aside.

Reflection questions

- **Do you believe God's fire has touched your soul?**
- **Do you believe that once God's fire touches our hearts, we cannot get rid of him? What about Judas? Did he allow Jesus to truly touch his soul or was he just going along for the ride?**

Have a blessed week,

Le Parron