

# HOMILY

## The Second Sunday of Ordinary time

January 20, 2008

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**St. John the Evangelist Parish**  
**Davison, Michigan**

John Grisham traveled to Hannibal, Missouri, to visit the boyhood home of author, Mark Twain. The house is owned by the City of Hannibal and attracts 135,000 visitors each year. Grisham was disappointed that he wasn't able to actually go inside the house. "You look through the windows," he said. "At each window there is a recorded message telling about each room." As Grisham proceeded from window to window, he met another tourist. "What do you think of it?" he asked. "Oh, I think it's great. I must have been here twenty, thirty times by now. This is a real shrine, you know." "Would you say the house is just like Twain described it in his books?" "I don't know," the tourist said, "I've never read one of his books."

Visiting his shrine but ignoring his books. Doubtless, there are many followers of Jesus who take the same superficial approach. They visit his shrine, but never read his teachings. They look in from the outside, but never go in and meet the person.

Some of us want to go farther. Some of us want to know Jesus. Not just as an interesting historical figure, but as the living Son of God. How do we find Jesus? This is the question for today. How do we find Jesus? Let me suggest several ways. Sometimes we find him through a dramatic act of revelation. It doesn't happen to many of us, but sometimes God breaks into people's lives in a clear, unmistakable act of disclosure. That's what happened to John the Baptist.

At first, John didn't recognize Jesus. Even though they were cousins, he did not really know who Jesus was until the day Jesus came to the Jordan to be baptized. It was then that the heavens opened and the Spirit descended like a dove and rested on Jesus. Sometimes it happens that way. Something dramatic happens and our lives are transformed.

When John saw the Spirit descend upon Jesus in the form of a dove and heard a voice from heaven, he knew without a doubt that Jesus was the Messiah. John believed that day because of a personal act of revelation. Sometimes that happens to people. The truth of God comes into their lives in such a dramatic fashion that they can scarcely deny that they have been in his presence. That's one way of finding Jesus.

Another way of finding him is through the witness of others. A day after his baptism, John the Baptist sees Jesus approaching and exclaims, "*Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!*" Two of John's followers hear John's witness and begin to follow Jesus, not because of any dramatic vision they had, but because they trusted John.

My guess is that this is the way most of us come to Christ – through the witness of others. It may have been our parents or our spouse or a special personality who made an indelible impression on us. I know that the presence of many Catholic chaplains in the service during the war made a big difference on people, changing their views about Catholics. How many of us have found Christ through the witness of others – teachers in school, kindly neighbors, devout parents? Let's thank God for them. Would we be here today if it weren't for them? Their witness made the critical difference in our Christian pilgrimage.

There are others who have discovered Christ while living the Christian faith. Two months before his assassination, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., spoke to his congregation at Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta about his death in what, oddly enough, would become his eulogy. Dr. King told his congregation:

*"Every now and then I think about my own death and I think about my own funeral. If any of you are around when I have to meet my day, I don't want a long funeral. And if you get somebody to deliver the eulogy, tell them not to talk too long. Every now and then I wonder what I want them to say. Tell them not to mention that I have a Nobel Peace prize. That isn't important. Tell them not to mention that I have three or four hundred awards. That's not important. I'd like someone to*

*say that day that Martin Luther King tried to give his life serving others. I'd like someone to say that Martin Luther King tried to love somebody. I want you to say that I tried to love and serve humanity."*

Dr. King concluded with these words:

*"I won't have the luxurious things of life, but I just want to leave a committed life behind."*

Did Martin Luther King have a level of commitment when he first began his ministry? It's doubtful. He had youthful enthusiasm to be sure. He had strong convictions. But only after years of walking in Christ's footsteps did he match his words with even more powerful actions. It would be wonderful if our witness was as effective as John the Baptist or Martin Luther King, Jr.

Carl Jung was counseling a man who had been receiving therapy for six months and was getting no better. Finally Dr. Jung said, "Friend, I cannot do any more for you. What you need is God." "How do I find God, Dr. Jung?" "I do not know," said Jung, "but I suspect if you find a group of people that believe in him passionately and just spend time with them, you will find God."