

HOMILY FOR 23rd SUNDAY ORDINARY TIME
SEPTEMBER 9, 2006

Introduction

After just hearing the Scripture readings from Isaiah, St. James and Mark's Gospel as well as the Psalm response, it may be well to single out facets of each.

-Isaiah speaks about consolation for frightened hearts, for those who are blind, the deaf the lame and the mute.

-St. James issues a warning about ignoring the poor and says: "did not God choose those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of God's Reign".

-The Psalm response reiterates all of this in some detail: "the Lord sets captives free, gives sight to the blind, raises up those who were bowed down, protects strangers, sustains the fatherless and the widow, provides justice for the oppressed and food for the hungry".

-In today's Gospel Jesus puts all of this into concrete action as the one who is God-among-us. He gives special attention to a deaf-mute, taking the person off by himself and attending to her needs.

I All of this speaks a "preferential option for the poor", something which we at Our Lady Queen of Peace have been praying over, reflecting on and coming to a decision about for the past several months – a way of being parish which looks at everything we do from the point of view of how it will affect the poor.

II What a difference these Scriptures and this parish-wide debate are with what we shall begin to see this Sunday on our TV sets and which will last until February: Professional Football.

In place of Isaiah's concern for the frightened, the blind, the lame and the mute, we shall see grown men telling the world that they are Number 1, and that "winning isn't everything, it's the only thing".

In place of James' warning us to pay attention to the poor, TV commercials will interrupt each game countless times to tell people that we must pay attention to our own bodies, our cars and our beer.

In place of Jesus' example of taking time out for a deaf-mute, our culture of pro football will tell us to take time to admire overweight men get a ball past an imaginary line – to admire poor young women flaunting their bodies in front of leering crowds

We'll hear of blitzes, bombs, attacks and matchups. We won't hear how many over excited middle aged men will have heart attacks in stadiums across the country or how much money is being bet on these "games" or what the television industry is paying to interrupt the so-called game trying to sell us one more thing we don't need.

Conclusion

If you have to watch pro-football during these fall Sundays, at least try to keep it in some kind of perspective. The preferential option for the poor is not found on the FedEx fields of America.