

4th Sunday in Ordinary Time (Super Bowl Sunday)

Homily Given By: Fr. Vincent Gluc, OFM Conv.

February 3, 2019

(Jeremiah 1: 4-5, 17-19)

(1 Corinthians 12:31 – 13:13)

(Luke 4: 21-30)

If I were to ask you what Sunday this is, I'm sure I wouldn't hear, "The 4th Sunday in Ordinary Time". Instead, I'd be reminded that it's Super Bowl Sunday!

We all know that there's nothing ordinary about Super Bowl Sunday. It's the culmination of a long football season...longer for most housewives, or, as they are called...“football widows”. It is the moment when the best of the best come forward on the field, although I'm sure that the New Orleans Saints have a different opinion on that. And so, as the world of football celebrates its “High Holy Day” – Super Bowl Sunday – the Church celebrates the 4th Sunday in Ordinary Time.

We can certainly bet that the coaches and staffs of the Los Angeles Rams and New England Patriots worked hard on their strategy and game plan. I'm sure that we are in for a good game, where only one team will come out ahead and take home the prize. Although we are not members of either team or city, we will be watching from the sidelines of our living rooms.

As Christians, we too are part of a team, but we are called to come off the sidelines, our pews, and our homes, and be counted. When it comes to our faith in Jesus, there are no sidelines – only a playing field as the Gospels remind us: we are either with Him or against Him. As followers of Jesus, every day is a Super Bowl, an opportunity for us to do our best as individuals and as a community – to move up the field of life toward our goal...the Kingdom of Heaven.

Just as the Los Angeles Rams and the New England Patriots will have their game plan and strategy, so do we as Christians follow a game plan as outlined by the 10 Commandments and the Gospel of Jesus. However, there needs to be more than just a game plan and a strategy. As in life as well as in sports, attitude and discipline are also essential in carrying out the plan.

God's Word today speaks of the challenges Jesus and Jeremiah faced from the very people who should have been on their team, but ended up becoming their opposition. Jeremiah took his beatings in life for what he stood for, and Jesus was almost thrown off a cliff in today's Gospel. In the end, Jesus, our quarterback, was eventually sacked and was hung upon the Cross for us. His was not a Super Bowl trophy; it was the Cross, the sign of our hope in eternal life – in that super celebration we call Heaven.

Jesus calls us to be part of His team and to work together, not to tear one another apart, as St. Paul reminds us today in the second reading, but to use our gifts to build up the Church and help to establish His reign...His Kingdom in this world.

St. Paul also reminds the Corinthians, and all of us, that no matter how wonderful the gift, whether it be prophecy, speaking in tongues, or faith to move mountains...if it's not exercised in love, it is worthless.

When it comes to following Christ and being part of the super celebration we call Heaven, the only ones that count will be those on the playing field of faith...those working at reaching the goal and leading the team on to victory.

As you watch the Super Bowl tonight, think of the part you play as a follower of Jesus. Do you take an active role in His Church, willing to quarterback at times, or maybe serve as a receiver, taking the ball and running with it? Have you at times fumbled along, dropping the ball of our faith and then recovered His Word and presence at another time in your life? Is God's love important enough for you to place your life on the line and defend your faith, facing the forces coming your way because of your belief in Him?

Jesus encourages us to work toward those things which last forever. May our goal be eternal life as we work together toward that goal, as one faith community...awaiting that super celebration in the Kingdom of Heaven.