

15th SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (Cycle B)

July 13, 2003 -- Deacon Bill Nourse, Ed.D.

INTRODUCTION

In the beginning of the classic movie “Citizen Kane,” we see an image of a distant, fog-shrouded castle on a hill. We soon learn that this is Xanadu, the home of America's own Kubla Khan – Charles Foster Kane, the legendary newspaper magnate – a thinly disguised caricature of William Randolph Hearst, of course.

Xanadu is described as the “costliest monument of a man to himself” – I’ve never been to Hearst’s San Simeon, but they tell me the resemblance is not coincidental.

We meet “Citizen Kane” at the moment of his death -- uttering the single cryptic word “Rosebud” with his last breath. All through the movie, we wonder . . . what was “Rosebud?” What did it mean? What profound truth was in Kane’s mind at the moment of death?

We don’t learn the truth until the final scene – after we have become thoroughly acquainted with Kane and his endless quest for power and possessions.

MOVE

Kane was never satisfied. He never had enough. He always wanted more, and the more he had, the more unsatisfied he was. Power, wealth, greed, ego, excess, abuse . . . it’s all there. That’s what he thought life was all about.

Kane was played by Orson Welles, and there was more than a little of Kane in Welles himself – it is said that as Orson Welles flamboyantly made his dramatic grand entrance at a party (wearing a flowing cape, as I recall), one of the guests said to another, “There, but for the grace of God, goes God.”

MOVE

Kane had it all wrong, didn't he? He tried to define himself by what he had – power, wealth, ego, excess. The more he had, the more he was – or so he thought.

I remember when I first began to realize that there is a big difference between what we *do* and what we *are*. I remember the very day – I was in the Navy – and someone accused me of being a “sailor.” I replied that, yes, I am in the Navy at the moment – that is what I *do* – but I am not a sailor – that is not what I *am*. There is a big difference between what I do and what I am. I am not defined by my occupation, or the uniform I wear, or what I have. That's not the essence of “me.” That's not “who I am.”

It's kind of like Amos – he had worked as a herdsman and a dresser of sycamores – but that's what he did, not what he was. What he was, was a prophet. And aren't we all?

Pope John Paul II saw it clearly. He wrote that only in Christ do human beings discover who they are and the depth of God's plan for them. The meaning of life is faith in God and service to others and discerning God's plan for us. In the final analysis, we all have but one purpose in life -- we live for the glory of God!

MOVE

We see it unfold in today's reading from Paul's Letter to the Church at Ephesus – the Trinitarian God, at work in us, making us all we are.

God the Father “chose us in him before the foundation of the world, to be holy and without blemish before him.” We began in the mind of the Father before creation! He “destined us for adoption to himself through Jesus Christ” – to be redeemed and forgiven and gathered to unity in God the Son – and to “be sealed” and have his will made known to us through God the Holy Spirit.

This is our inheritance – not the job, or the title, or the uniform, or the castle and the warehouse full of possessions accumulated by Citizen Kane. The glory of God is shown forth in us! God makes us what we *are*, not what we *do*. Our real job is not about power and wealth and possessions and ego – it's about going forth to love and serve the Lord and be prophets – preaching the Gospel by our example, by praising God throughout our lives.

MOVE

Now, that may not be all that easy. A lot of people don't want to hear it. In our first reading, we see the prophet Amos being kicked out of Bethel – “get out of town, we don't want to listen to that kind of stuff here.” In the Gospel, we see the same idea – if you encounter resistance, then shake the dust of that place off your feet. That doesn't mean just to give up without trying – it just means that we should expect to encounter resistance.

CONCLUSION

There's an old bumper sticker – “He who dies with the most toys wins” – that's the opposite of what we learn from today's readings, and from Citizen Kane. He who dies with the most toys leaves them all behind for someone else to deal with – like “Rosebud.”

Well, just in case you haven't seen “Citizen Kane,” I'm not going to tell you what “Rosebud” meant – if you haven't seen “Titanic,” I will tell you that the boat sinks at the end – but the end of “Citizen Kane” sort of leaves us wondering. Did Kane regret that he hadn't lived a simpler life? Will we? Did he wish he'd done things differently? Will we? Did he realize that all his wealth mattered less than a sense of personal meaning? Will we? Or was “Rosebud” just a random thought without meaning? I'll leave that part of it for you to decide.

READINGS

Reading I

Am 7:12-15

Amaziah, priest of Bethel, said to Amos,
"Off with you, visionary, flee to the land of Judah!
There earn your bread by prophesying,
but never again prophesy in Bethel;
for it is the king's sanctuary and a royal temple."
Amos answered Amaziah, "I was no prophet,
nor have I belonged to a company of prophets;
I was a shepherd and a dresser of sycamores.
The LORD took me from following the flock, and said to me,
Go, prophesy to my people Israel."

Responsorial Psalm

Ps 85:9-10, 11-12, 13-14

R (8) Lord, let us see your kindness, and grant us your salvation.
I will hear what God proclaims;
the Lord—for he proclaims peace.
Near indeed is his salvation to those who fear him,
glory dwelling in our land.
R Lord, let us see your kindness, and grant us your salvation.
Kindness and truth shall meet;
justice and peace shall kiss.
Truth shall spring out of the earth,
and justice shall look down from heaven.
R Lord, let us see your kindness, and grant us your salvation.
The Lord himself will give his benefits;
our land shall yield its increase.
Justice shall walk before him,
and prepare the way of his steps.
R Lord, let us see your kindness, and grant us your salvation.

Reading II

Eph 1:3-14 or 1:3-10

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
who has blessed us in Christ
with every spiritual blessing in the heavens,
as he chose us in him, before the foundation of the world,
to be holy and without blemish before him.
In love he destined us for adoption to himself through Jesus Christ,
in accord with the favor of his will,

for the praise of the glory of his grace
that he granted us in the beloved.
In him we have redemption by his blood,
the forgiveness of transgressions,
in accord with the riches of his grace that he lavished upon us.
In all wisdom and insight, he has made known to us
the mystery of his will in accord with his favor
that he set forth in him as a plan for the fullness of times,
to sum up all things in Christ, in heaven and on earth.

In him we were also chosen,
destined in accord with the purpose of the One
who accomplishes all things according to the intention of his will,
so that we might exist for the praise of his glory,
we who first hoped in Christ.
In him you also, who have heard the word of truth,
the gospel of your salvation, and have believed in him,
were sealed with the promised holy Spirit,
which is the first installment of our inheritance
toward redemption as God's possession, to the praise of his glory.

Gospel

Mk 6:7-13

Jesus summoned the Twelve and began to send them out two by two
and gave them authority over unclean spirits.
He instructed them to take nothing for the journey
but a walking stick—
no food, no sack, no money in their belts.
They were, however, to wear sandals
but not a second tunic.
He said to them,
"Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave.
Whatever place does not welcome you or listen to you,
leave there and shake the dust off your feet
in testimony against them."
So they went off and preached repentance.
The Twelve drove out many demons,
and they anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them