



January 16, 2011 The Second Sunday of Ordinary Time

A man is coming after me who ranks ahead of me because he existed before me.
John 1: 30

Dear Friends;

The great Renaissance artist, Michelangelo Buonarrotti, once overheard a Roman pilgrim (tourist) attribute one of his Pieta sculptures to one of his rivals, Cristoforo Solari. In a fit of rage he took hammer and chisel, then inscribed Mary's sash: *Michel Angelus Bonaratus Florent Facibat* (Michelangelo the Florentine made this). Later he regretted this fit of pride and anger and never signed any of his other works.

While he may have had a flash of pride, Michelangelo strove to be humble. He once said that the greatest work of art is but a "shadow of the divine perfection." In his seventies he was writing a nephew about his life's work as an artist, "Many believe—and I believe that I have been designated by God for this work. In spite of my old age, I do not want to give it up; I work out of love of God in whom I put all my hope."

For Michelangelo what he did as an artist was not just a career, commission or to make money. He did it as a ministry for the Church and service to God. His work continues to inspire us. This was his life's vocation—a calling from God, which he heeded all his life.

Even when he worked he saw it as God working through him. He would approach a block of marble he said he would try and uncover the figure that already was inside. He was not making it according to his plan but setting it free to be whatever God had intended. As a sculptor he would wear a hat with a lighted candle on top. He said that this was so no shadow of him might fall upon the marble or canvas.

In today's Gospel according to John, John the Baptist realizes that his job is to point out the Messiah and not let his shadow fall over him. Like Michelangelo uncover a figure in the block of marble, John must uncover and announce the Messiah when he appears.

We live in a culture that is obsessed with the individual ego. We want our name on everything. We become vitriolic when someone else takes center stage. And we believe that it is our job to impose our individual will on the world. All this has gotten us is loneliness, despair, pathological competitiveness and violence. Last week's events in Arizona reflect the fruit of our ego obsessed culture.

Today let us take up the virtue of humility like the Baptist, and Michelangelo. We need to seek the will of God in our lives and to have the sense to light the candle of wisdom lest we cast a shadow and not see the face of Christ before us.

Peace,

Fr Ron