

## 22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time - (8/31/08)

One of the most sobering questions in Scripture is, "What profit would there be for one to gain the whole world and forfeit his life?" As I look at the interplay between Christian values and secular values in our culture, I am afraid that many Christians have been duped into not making the hard decisions of discipleship. The killing of our unborn children through abortion has been so institutionalized that most people take it for granted and think they are not responsible. But abortion is not possible without the backing of a majority of citizens who vote for candidates that support abortion. Many women and men in this country and the world have been told that the only way they can get ahead in the world is by destroying their unborn children. They have forfeited their souls, sometimes without fully realizing it, and have not even received the world in return!

There are some people who say they vote for candidates who support abortion because of other issues, maybe for better health care, or a better economy, or a better environment, or against war where innocents are unintentionally harmed and killed, and do not directly support abortion. But these are not nearly as evil as the intentional killing of our unborn babies, and because they will not take a stand against politicians who support abortion, the killing continues. Because they will not deny themselves and take up their crosses, over 45 million human lives in America have been deliberately killed through abortion. Their voices are crying out to God for Justice. Do not think that God does not hear! We must pray that all who support abortion, directly or indirectly, come to their senses and end this abomination once and for all in this country. As Edmund Burke famously put it, "All it takes for evil to succeed is for good people to do nothing." If every one who professed to be Christian would consistently vote against pro-abortion candidates, we would be able to right this wrong and respect the creation of life as a generous gift from God to our country and the whole world. May God give us the strength to do His will instead of our own. Amen!

## 21st Sunday in Ordinary Time - (8/24/08)

The main thrust of this Sunday's readings is to confirm the authority of God's choice of leaders. Isaiah tells of God correcting a bad leader and replacing him with good leadership, giving him the "key of the house of David." This is the role of the chief Steward who is charge of the house/ palace. Jesus continues this symbol with the giving to Peter of the "keys to the kingdom of heaven" (Mt. 16:19). Peter becomes the leader with stewardship responsibilities (after the resurrection and Pentecost). That is the source of our recognition of papal authority. Most Protestants don't accept this authority, although it is clear what Jesus was doing based on the Isaihan precedent. Matthew 23:2-3 is another instance where Jesus accepts the teaching authority of the Pharisees even though He criticized how they acted in public. It was understood after the Resurrection that this teaching authority had passed to Peter and the Apostles, and continues to this day through the pope and college of Bishops.

Stewardship is also the responsibility of each of us in the faith community. Please take the opportunity this week to think and pray about how you will choose to use the gifts entrusted to you for the building up of God's Kingdom, beginning here and now. May God bless us even more in our generous sharing of God's grace. Amen!

20th Sunday in Ordinary Time - (8/17/08)

There's an old saying, "Success is 1% inspiration and 99% perspiration." Last week we talked about the need to continue to trust in God even when it seems that He is not listening. St. Theresa of Avila suggests that God pulls back from us a little to remind us of the limitations of our human condition and to remind us that humility is the basic virtue

necessary for communication with God. I trust her experience, though I might wish that God was my own private wishing well. This week's readings remind us again of the necessity to persevere in prayer. When at first God doesn't seem to answer our prayer, it is important to have enough faith to persevere, believing with all our heart that what we are asking is in God's will.

Do we believe that God's "No" could actually be a "Yes?" I am absolutely certain God can use a "no" to help us become better. Our responsibility is to trust in God enough that we can accept a "no" and turn it into a "yes" in our own life. That means we might need to change our vision of how what we want could fit into God's greater plan for all humanity as well as for ourselves. It is a mystery how it all works out.

If we believe that what we are praying for is good for us and for humanity, we should be willing to pray for it, even if it takes the rest of our lives. That perseverance shows true trust in God's plan for us to know the fruits of His love. May God bless us in our prayers. Amen!

19th Sunday in Ordinary Time - (8/10/08)

Elijah experiences a feeling that may be familiar to many of us: he feels he is a failure. He has just defeated the 400 prophets of the false god Baal, and as a consequence Queen Jezebel has put a bounty on his head. He is tired of doing good, he wants to run away and die. He goes to a mountain alone to find some peace and quiet. God comes to him there but not as Elijah expected. God comes in the "tiny whispering sound" instead of the power of fire, wind, or earthquake.

In the gospel, Jesus too is tired (though He doesn't think He is a failure). The crowds have worn Him out and He needs quiet prayer with His Father. He sends his disciples on ahead. When He comes to them in the night walking on the water his disciples are terrified. But Jesus reassures them. Then Peter asks to come to the Lord over the water. Jesus commands him, and Peter begins his journey to the Lord. But he becomes frightened when he recognizes all the difficulties of the journey and begins to lose faith. Jesus has to save him from his fear. That is what Jesus does for us. When we are frightened or tired of the journey of faith, Jesus will come to strengthen us, perhaps not

walking on water, but perhaps in the grace of the sacraments or the prayers of friends. We are called to trust in the Lord and help strengthen one another on our journey of life. May we always be open to the grace of our Lord's presence with us. Amen!

18th Sunday in Ordinary Time - (8/03/08)

Many modern "theologians" attempt to explain away the miracle of the feeding of the multitude by claiming that the people already had the food and just needed to be convinced to share it with those around them. This is part of the secular humanist view of Christ as a "nice guy" who would never say a cross word to anyone except the religious

authorities, and who is not really God but is good at convincing people to share their food. We must be careful not to fall into this false teaching. Jesus is the God-man who loves us so much that He is willing to suffer and die so that we can be saved. That salvation is the purpose of Jesus' coming into the world. Sin has incredibly dreadful consequences for us. And only God-man is able to offer the grace for our redemption from sin.

One of the key points of the gospel passage is the concern of Jesus: "...his heart is moved with pity for them..." Because God/Jesus cares about us He wants to nourish us. The feeding of the multitude is a foretaste of the feeding of all God's people in the Eucharist. Jesus wants us to have all the grace we need to be "His heart and hands and feet" in our day-to-day lives. Let us be thankful for our fulfillment at the Eucharistic table by helping to nurture others with the same care that Jesus gives to us. Amen.