

Twenty-Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time (9/23/07)

Throughout the scriptures one of the most repetitive themes we hear in both the Old and New Testaments is the concern for the poor (when you hear “poor” think not just economically poor but all who are powerless). The prophet Amos strongly berates the wealthy merchants who cheat the powerless with God’s word: “Never will I forget a thing they have done.” Even though God allows people with evil and greedy hearts to temporarily prosper, He will remember their evil deeds when justice is finally meted out.

The gospel passage gives us the lesson that the wealth of this world which is passing should be used for serving God, which makes it true wealth. If we get caught up in trusting in money to solve our short-term needs which it can indeed do, and neglect our long-term needs, we will end up losing our relationship with God. When we use the wealth of this world to build up God’s Kingdom and to help those who are powerless (which Jesus once was for our sakes), we are truly wise. May God continue to bless us in our choices of using the things of this world to prepare for our future! Amen!

Twenty-Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time (9/16/07)

Moses could be considered a precursor to today's movie scriptwriter. He is considered the "author" of most of the Pentateuch, even if he didn't personally write every single word. Today's reading gives us a great story line with Moses as the leading star (next to God, of course). Moses intercedes for the Israelites to keep God from destroying them for their infidelity and starting over again. The reading gives us some insight into God, but that insight is limited by Moses human expectations of God. Moses expects God to be angry, and therefore he has to persuade God not to destroy the people. What we really see is God's expectation of us (Moses) that we pray to God on behalf of one another.

The Gospel parables relate to us a God who never gives up on us but keeps searching for us even when we stray. God is always interested in restoring us to the proper relationship with Himself and with others. In the parables the important element is God's fidelity to us. God wants us to understand that He will never be unfaithful to us. Reassured by this pledge, God expects us in return to be faithful to Him and each other. This is the key understanding for our salvation. It's not that we have a monster God who demands tyrannical obedience; rather we have a supremely loving God who doesn't want us to hurt each other or our relationship to God by being disobedient just because we don't see the harm in sinning (going against God's will). God wants us to trust in Him and His ways, which He reveals to us through the Scriptures and the Church. The big question for every human being, Can we, will we, be obedient even if we don't fully understand why God wants us to behave in certain ways??

Twenty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time (9/9/07)

Where does Wisdom come from? Well, first we recognize it in the ordinary experiences of life that are reflected upon. To that earthly wisdom is added the spiritual dimension of what God has revealed to humanity in Scripture, especially the life of Jesus, and the lived experience of the Church, the people of faith. From these sources we begin to understand a little bit of God's plan for the universe. Although we cannot comprehend the infinite plan of Love of God, God has revealed the essential elements of that plan in Jesus. Simply put, God created mankind and the universe in Love, mankind rebelled and sinned, God came to our redemption in the life and death of His Son Jesus, and salvation is once again offered to man. Each person is responsible for accepting the gift.

The real difference, and it is a major difference, between the first creation and the "recreation" in Christ is that the first time we were already "saved" and had to actively choose to be condemned by sinning, and in the second "recreation" we are condemned and have to actively choose to accept redemption through repentance. Those who listen to the Wisdom of God understand this and are willing to renounce all their possessions in order to follow Jesus, as He points out in the Gospel today (Lk 14:25-33). Those who cannot or will not renounce all possessions, either physical or mental (our thoughts), have chosen to continue their alienation from God. May God bless all who are so confused, and may we keep them in our prayers. Amen!

Twenty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time (9/2/07)

It has been said that the greatest virtue is love. Of course, there are many degrees of love. The highest is the Love of Jesus on the cross for us. Spousal love can and should approach that degree of love, but often falls short. Then there is love which is merely the love of self under the pretext of loving others. But there is another virtue that complements true Love, humility. Jesus is the most powerful presence in the universe, yet He allows himself to be humiliated and tortured and killed. In His humble obedience to the Father, His Love shines pure and makes our salvation possible.

Humility is really about our knowing who we are and who God is. When we recognize how great God is, we are filled with holy awe, and moved to bow down before God in worship. When we recognize who we are, made in God's image as His gift to us, we ought to be doubly awed. That is humility. However, God does not expect us to walk around with our heads to the ground all the time. He made us in His image to enjoy His creation and to witness to His Love in the world with humble but rejoicing hearts.

Humility helps us to see others also as made in the image of God and to treat all people, whether we know them or not, with the dignity of children of God. Most people might agree with that in principle but then have a hard time in daily life because they make negative judgments about others. Remember, we must always use our reason to judge behavior, but not people. We judge behavior so that we can help one another grow in holiness through our correction of one another in charity. But God alone can judge us as people. Through a humble examination of our conscience daily we can also help correct ourselves so that we can live better lives witnessing to God's Pure Love in our daily lives. Thank you Lord!