

August 3, 2014

Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Introduction to the First Reading: The theme of today's Mass is that the Lord takes care of our needs.

Reading 1 [Is 55:1-3](#)

Thus says the LORD:
All you who are thirsty,
come to the water!
You who have no money,
come, receive grain and eat;
Come, without paying and without cost,
drink wine and milk!
Why spend your money for what is not bread;
your wages for what fails to satisfy?
Heed me, and you shall eat well,
you shall delight in rich fare.
Come to me heedfully,
listen, that you may have life.
I will renew with you the everlasting covenant,
the benefits assured to David.

Responsorial Psalm [Ps 145:8-9, 15-16, 17-18](#)

R/ (cf. 16) **The hand of the Lord feeds us; he answers all our needs.**

The LORD is gracious and merciful,
slow to anger and of great kindness.

The LORD is good to all
and compassionate toward all his works.

R/ **The hand of the Lord feeds us; he answers all our needs.**

The eyes of all look hopefully to you,
and you give them their food in due season;

you open your hand
and satisfy the desire of every living thing.

R/ **The hand of the Lord feeds us; he answers all our needs.**

The LORD is just in all his ways
and holy in all his works.

The LORD is near to all who call upon him,
to all who call upon him in truth.

R/ **The hand of the Lord feeds us; he answers all our needs.**

Introduction to the Second Reading: St. Paul was on fire with love for Jesus and nothing could deter him. It can be the same for us if we are truly committed to Him.

Reading 2 [Rom 8:35, 37-39](#)

Brothers and sisters:

What will separate us from the love of Christ?
Will anguish, or distress, or persecution, or famine,
or nakedness, or peril, or the sword?

No, in all these things we conquer overwhelmingly
through him who loved us.

For I am convinced that neither death, nor life,
nor angels, nor principalities,
nor present things, nor future things,
nor powers, nor height, nor depth,
nor any other creature will be able to separate us
from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Gospel [Mt 14:13-21](#)

When Jesus heard of the death of John the Baptist,
he withdrew in a boat to a deserted place by himself.
The crowds heard of this and followed him on foot from their towns.

When he disembarked and saw the vast crowd,
his heart was moved with pity for them, and he cured their sick.

When it was evening, the disciples approached him and said,
“This is a deserted place and it is already late;
dismiss the crowds so that they can go to the villages
and buy food for themselves.”

Jesus said to them, “There is no need for them to go away;
give them some food yourselves.”

But they said to him,

“Five loaves and two fish are all we have here.”

Then he said, “Bring them here to me, ”

and he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass.

Taking the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven,
he said the blessing, broke the loaves,
and gave them to the disciples,
who in turn gave them to the crowds.

They all ate and were satisfied,
and they picked up the fragments left over—
twelve wicker baskets full.

Those who ate were about five thousand men,
not counting women and children.

Homily: Many years ago I visited a sick person who lived alone. She was a widow. From the moment I said hello she talked nonstop about how terrible her children were. They almost never called her and it had been years since anyone had visited her. If I tried to talk about other things she came right back to how mean they were to her and how much she hated them. Each time I visited her it was the same tirade of criticism and hatred, and a repeat of all the mean things they had said and done. I began to understand why they might be reluctant to visit her.

One day I said that she was no longer young and that she could die one day and that it was important to try to forgive the past. She screamed: "I'll never forgive them as long as I live!" When I spoke of heaven once as a place of peace with God and everyone else, she said: "If my kids are there I'm not going in!"

I don't know when or how she died. I pray that she changed before that day. But the reason I spoke about her is because of what I often hear people say about heaven. They'll say something like this: "I believe there is a heaven. I believe everyone goes there as soon as they die. But I don't believe there is a hell. Jesus would never send anyone to hell. He's too good. There is no such place as hell and no devil either."

Well for starters this lady certainly wouldn't go to heaven as soon as she died. Even if God himself invited her in she wouldn't go. There's nothing He could do to force her. Secondly how do these people know that heaven exists? They'll say it's because Jesus said so. He spoke of it often. That's true. But if Jesus is their source then they also have to realize that Jesus said that hell really does exist. He spoke about that often too.

What about the statement that Jesus would never send anyone to hell? I think that's true. God the Father wouldn't either. We are all his children and He loves us. I think we send ourselves to hell. That lady I spoke about could actually be stubborn enough and so full of hatred that she could stand outside the gates of heaven forever and refuse to go in. She could nurse her wounds and refuse to forgive forever. Even knowing that her children had forgiven her and were now happy could make her hate them all the more. Yes, hell is real. Purgatory, whatever else it is, would be a place where we could change enough to be able to go to heaven. It's the chance God gives us after death to adjust our attitude and behavior, to forgive all the past and replace the negative with the positive. But this is possible only if before we die we at least try to forgive and to ask God to forgive us.

Remembering the attitude of that lady, perhaps my prayer should be less about asking God to change everybody else and more about asking God to help me change.