

Commentary on the Readings for July 23, 2023

The 16th Sunday in Ordinary Time

In today's readings, there are many themes, but they seem to dovetail into the main theme of turning to the Holy Spirit for guidance in our daily lives. This should not be an all-out unloading of our worries or problems, but rather a deliberate consciousness of seeking the Holy Spirit's help in working out our problems and fulfilling our role in God's Plan of Salvation. Some people don't want help from God, or anyone else; and others don't want to employ the gifts God has given them. So where do we find a balance? That balance comes by way of the two of you working together. God and mankind make a great team. If you doubt that, you should read John Donne's famous essay poem, "*No Man is an Island*" or Francis Thompson's "*The Hound of Heaven*." Both are highly recommended.

The **First Reading** is from the ***Book of Wisdom (12:13- 19)***. The writer must have been very close to God and experienced for himself the many benefits God holds out to those who ask for His help. This whole passage is true and sincere Wisdom. From this we should learn that only by understanding and working at our relationship with God can we be happy and safe in His hands.

The **Responsorial Psalm (86:5-16)** picks up the same theme of God's abundant love, mercy and forgiveness; and rightly so. However, we should not forget that He is also perfect in justice, which requires punishment for wrongdoing - again, that balance. Today, we have a tendency to think of God as "all loving," **but we forget that balance requires justice.**

The **Second Reading** is from ***St. Paul's Letter to the Romans (8:26-27)***. Here we return to the theme of the Holy Spirit helping us. Although Paul is talking about prayer in this passage, he implies that we need to seek the Spirit's help in all things. This is the Holy Spirit's role and we should call upon Him for guidance and direction.

The **Gospel Reading** is from ***Matthew (13:24-43)***. In this long passage, Jesus gives us three parables, each having the elements of planting, growth and harvesting or reaping the benefits of one's work. This confuses the disciples, who ask for an explanation, which Jesus gives in private. We should review this part of the reading often because it reminds us that at some point in time, "*The Son of man will send His angels to collect, out of His kingdom, all who cause others to sin and all evildoers, and will throw them into the fiery furnace.*"

We know that God is kind and merciful, and full of love, but there comes a time when that balance must be obtained. We cannot assume that God will forgive our sins or "little white lies" without punishment. So call on the Holy Spirit today to help you in seeking balance in your spiritual, as well as temporal life. Something to think about during your prayer time this week!

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