

5 July 2020

Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Matthew 11:25-30

So, we left off last weekend in this year's march through Matthew's Gospel account with the end of chapter ten, the whole of which was devoted to Christian discipleship. Between then and today's reading, we had stories about John the Baptist's followers wondering if Jesus is really the one John is pointing to or if they should look for another. Jesus compliments John as the great man born of woman but also says that the least in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than he. And then he proceeds to criticize communities like Chorazin who have rejected his preaching. "Woe to you!" he says. Then, **right after mentioning those who rejected him, he speaks in today's passage about those who have accepted the Good News.** He praises God, "For what you have hidden from the wise and the learned you have revealed to **the little ones.**" Little ones usually gets translated as "simple people," but in popular imagination is also means children.

Remember the story about my young friend in the summer after her second grade year? She had an intellectual disability but no disability of the heart. She and I were sitting together at a church league softball game and she was eating peanuts in the shell. After a while I noticed that she was getting the peanuts in the shell from the bench behind her in the bleachers, and that they in fact belonged to other people not her family. So, I took action. I said, "**Hey friend of mine, I think those are other people's peanuts. Maybe you shouldn't be eating them?**" With her knowing heart, she looked at my puzzled and said, "**What? I'm sharing!**" That's the Kingdom of God—hard to understand for those of us like me so used to being obsessed with what is mine and yours.

Similarly, one our St. James School students, Ben, when he was about seven years old raised his hand to respond to a question at school mass. The reading was about all the **early Christians selling everything they owned and laying the money at the foot of the Apostles** to distribute each according to their need. I had asked, "**Why would they give away all their stuff like that—I mean, don't we like our stuff?**" Ben answered, "**Because God gives us everything.**" I have to see I didn't get the connection at first, but he explained. "**If God gives us everything he has, then we can give everything we have.**" **Wow.** What God has revealed to the little ones.

The **second part of today's Gospel reading** has been put to music many times because of the comfort it has brought to believers over the centuries. "Come to me all you who labor and are burdened and I will give you rest." As we've heard in recent weeks, there is a call and a demand that comes from Christ to us, always rooted in love for us, but **today's reading shows us that Jesus realizes that there are times when we just need to be loved and find rest in him, and that's OK.**

It really is, and that might be all of the Good News that you need to hear today. **But, there is more.** While instinctively hearing this Gospel as inviting me to rest in Jesus, I am increasingly aware that reading like this always have two sides. One side is what Jesus wants to give us. **The other side, is putting ourselves in Jesus' place as offering rest and peace to others.** ...what we who are called to live as his body are supposed to do.

There is a **statue of Jesus on the campus of the University of Notre Dame**, right in the heart of campus, directly facing the famous golden dome. Jesus has his hands outstretched wide with his hands toward us, and the inscription reads, "**Venite ad me omnes,**" "**Come to me, all people.**"

Now, none of us is the savior of all humanity like Jesus, but that inviting attitude is meant to be our own. In a beautiful reflection on this statue, Notre Dame President **Fr. John Jenkins** wrote “At the heart of campus, [this statue] is a daily reminder of the kind of community we strive to be—one that welcomes each one fully, treasures their gifts as a reflection of God, supports them and shares their struggles. ...We are all called to live in solidarity with all people, which arises from recognizing that the well-being of each person is a concern for us all. We are all in one way or another, our sister’s or brother’s keeper. Solidarity demands that we strive to overcome fragmentation and separation to see the deeper unity we share with all people.” Indeed, we like to claim as our motto at St. James “All Are Welcome.” In doing so we are putting ourselves in the place of the one who said “Come to me all you who are weary and find life burdensome, and I will give you rest.”

Don’t feel selfish if you need to receive the consolation of Jesus—he wants to give it to you!—but neither should you be unaware of the potential you have to offer that consolation yourself. May the weary find a welcoming heart in all of Jesus’ followers.



