

Commentary on the Readings for July 2, 2017

The 13th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Have you ever asked yourself why you do some things? I'm not talking about walking into a room and then asking yourself why you came into this room, and no, I'm not referring to asking yourself or someone nearby "Where are my glasses?" only to be told or find them on your own head. I am referring to actions that have consequences or meaning for yourself or someone else. The readings today ask us to examine our purpose in life in connection with our relationship to Jesus Christ. Another way of saying this is: Do we set priorities in our actions and, more importantly, in our relationships? Let's see how the readings address this subject:

The **First Reading** is from the **Second Book of Kings (4:8-16a)**. Here, we have a story about the prophet Elisha, the protégé of Elijah, being invited into the home of a well-to-do lady because she enjoyed their conversations about God and the Covenant. This became a routine whenever Elisha was in that area. So, to further the relationship, she prepared a room for him with the approval of her husband so that Elisha might have a fitting place to stay. In return, Elisha asked her husband if there was some way that he could show his appreciation. The husband asked for prayers for the woman because she was barren. Elisha did more than that; he promised her that within the year she would have a son. The essence of this story is that each of the characters is acting in accordance with God's will and their relationship with God.

The **Responsorial Psalm** is **(89:2-3. 16-19)**. This beautiful prayer is one that the lady in the first reading might have prayed because it is in line with her thinking. The Psalm, in general, is a song of praise, thanksgiving and personal well-being for "people who know the joyful shout in the light of your countenance. O Lord." What it is saying is that we must examine why we do what we do.

The **Second Reading** is from St. Paul's **Letter to the Romans (6:3-11)**. Pay attention to the first line of this passage; "Are you unaware that we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?" What it is saying (in more common language) is that if we are truly Christians, that is, followers of Christ, then we should conform everything we say and do to be in accordance with His teachings and His will, or else His death, for us, would have been in vain. This is not as difficult a command as it sounds if, at the beginning of each day, you start with a brief prayer asking for the Holy Spirit's guidance in every thought, word and deed.

The **Gospel Reading** is from the **Gospel of Matthew (10:37-42)**. This passage, if taken out of context, is pretty strong language. In it, Jesus is not saying that you can't love family members and friends; rather He would be the first to encourage that. However, here He is talking about setting priorities in our relationships and possessions. If they are in line with His will for you then He will bless your love and actions. The second part of this passage, which is somewhat of a tribute to the lady in the first reading above, confirms this. Again, every one of our actions, even the simple ones, if performed in accordance with the will of God, is blessed and can bring us closer to the Lord and God of all creation. Something to think about during your prayer time this week!

MFB