

Cycle B 25th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reading 1, Wis 2:12, 17-20

The wicked say: Let us beset the just one, because he is obnoxious to us; he sets himself against our doings, reproaches us for transgressions of the law and charges us with violations of our training. Let us see whether his words be true; let us find out what will happen to him. For if the just one be the son of God, God will defend him and deliver him from the hand of his foes. With revilement and torture let us put the just one to the test that we may have proof of his gentleness and try his patience. Let us condemn him to a shameful death; for according to his own words, God will take care of him.

Responsorial Psalm, Ps 54:3-4, 5, 6 and 8

R. (6b) The Lord upholds my life.

O God, by your name save me, and by your might defend my cause. O God, hear my prayer; hearken to the words of my mouth.

R. The Lord upholds my life.

For the haughty men have risen up against me, the ruthless seek my life; they set not God before their eyes.

R. The Lord upholds my life.

Behold, God is my helper; the Lord sustains my life. Freely will I offer you sacrifice; I will praise your name, O LORD, for its goodness.

R. The Lord upholds my life.

Reading II, Jas 3:16—4:3

Beloved: Where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every foul practice. But the wisdom from above is first of all pure, then peaceable, gentle, compliant, full of mercy and good fruits, without inconstancy or insincerity. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace for those who cultivate peace.

Where do the wars and where do the conflicts among you come from? Is it not from your passions that make war within your members? You covet but do not possess. You kill and envy but you cannot obtain; you fight and wage war. You do not possess because you do not ask. You ask but do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.

Gospel, Mk 9:30-37

Jesus and his disciples left from there and began a journey through Galilee, but he did not wish anyone to know about it. He was teaching his disciples and telling them, "The Son of Man is to be handed over to men and they will kill him, and three days after his death the Son of Man will rise. But they did not understand the saying, and they were afraid to question him.

They came to Capernaum and, once inside the house, he began to ask them, "What were you arguing about on the way?" But they remained silent. They had been discussing among themselves on the way who was the greatest. Then he sat down, called the Twelve, and said to them, "If anyone wishes to be first, he shall be the last of all and the servant of all." Taking a child, he placed it in the their midst, and putting his arms around it, he said to them, "Whoever receives one child such as this in my name, receives me; and whoever receives me, receives not me but the One who sent me."

Someone once said, *“Nothing we do, however virtuous, can be accomplished alone; therefore, we must be saved by Love.”*

Today we need to recognize the Atlanta Archdiocesan Council of Catholic Women who are having their annual convention here at St. Andrew. Welcome and God Bless all you women of our Archdiocese, who with all your gifts, talent, and love, bless us every day.

This gathering reminded me of one morning several years ago at the Friday morning men’s group I attend. We were asked to identify the most holy person in our lives...they had to be a person we actually knew, not someone we admired, like the Pope. To a man, we all mentioned women in our lives as the most holy....and how they taught us where their holiness came from. The Scripture readings this week tell us that God loves us so much that as we struggle with life, he blesses us with gifts of wisdom from above....like the holy women in our lives give us. The more we respond in faith, gentleness, and love; the more we understand that God’s wisdom and mercy come by cultivating peace.

When I was in 6th grade I was a ringleader among the kids in my neighborhood. I had quite a mouth on me showboating my bravado, but I was careful to keep it from my parents and sisters. One day my mother called me in and asked me to sit down. I wondered what was up. She said she had heard reports about my behavior. Then, of all the things she could have said to me, my mother said, “Roger, you disappoint me.” It cut like a knife. It stabbed me in the heart...I was devastated! A spanking or grounding would have been much easier to deal with. She chose the words that stopped me dead in my tracks, and I changed from that day forward. No more swearing...no more disappointing my mother...she never told my father...and she never had to say that to me again.

So who have been these most holy, most important people in our lives? Probably they were not rich and famous. Most likely they gave us what we could not give ourselves. Probably they taught us important lessons, gave us important ideas and values. Without a doubt, they unselfishly gave us their love. They gave us their time, their energy and their

concern. They probably sacrificed their own comfort and convenience to give us things they simply wanted to give us. Most likely they corrected us when we went astray; they gave us moral norms, guidelines to develop a quality character; and they challenged us to be a better person. They taught us how to love God. They mentored us by their example of Christian living. They nurtured us in the life of our Church and her Sacraments. In other words, they were following Jesus by placing before us on life's banquet table the necessary nourishment for our souls.

Our lives are different when we recognize Jesus is here with us. Our priorities change. What we do and making it matter, changes. God has given us priceless blessings: our very lives, unconditional love, the Eucharist and other Sacraments, free will, eternal life in His kingdom, and as the 2nd reading said He brings us peace, gentleness and mercy.

In this parish we are not about buildings and budgets and bigness. St. Andrew Catholic Church is about Jesus Christ. And, with Jesus leading our community we realize that people who worship here are transformed. You know, I think we do a good job at worshiping...we know how to praise and glorify God, and pray to Him. But you know, Jesus never said "worship me." He said, "follow me." So, like the disciples, though it may take some time for us as it did for them, we learn a very hard lesson from Jesus: He needed to suffer the intense injustice and savage pain and humiliation of human life...He needed to be broken as we sometimes are broken by life. And, like the disciples, we come to know it's not about putting the greatest or holiest person among us on a pedestal...though surely it can't be so bad to recognize those who guide us to journey together following Jesus. But, we don't serve each other because we are trained to serve or to receive recognition, we don't serve because we are expected to, we serve each other because we know that we too are broken, and can't get through life alone! So you see, it's about Jesus Christ, alive, here and now...it's about Him, it's not about us. Once we decide to follow Jesus, we realize we are part of something much bigger than ourselves. When we deny ourselves, pick up our cross, and share what He has trusted us with, the world changes! We are

stewards, not owners. We are servants sharing God's blessings. There is no us versus them...there's only we! So together we dig deep and we get involved in our families and our vocations and our ministries journeying together loving and serving each other.

I would like to share a parable that may help us better understand: A holy man was having a conversation with God and said, "Lord, I would like to know what Heaven and Hell are like." God led the holy man to two doors. He opened one of the doors and the holy man looked in. In the middle of the room was a large round table. On the table was a large pot of stew which smelled delicious and made the holy man's mouth water. But, the people sitting around the table were thin and sickly. They appeared to be famished. They had spoons with very long handles strapped to their arms. Each found it possible to reach into the pot of stew and take a spoonful, but because the handle was longer than their arms, they could not get the spoons back into their mouths. The holy man shuddered at the sight of their misery and suffering. The Lord said, "This is Hell." They went to the next room and opened the door. The room looked exactly the same as the first one! There was a large round table with a large pot of stew that made the holy man's mouth water again. The people were equipped with the same long-handled spoons, but here the people were well nourished and plump, laughing and talking. The holy man said, "I don't understand." "It is simple" God said, "You see, they have learned to feed each other, to care for each other, with what I gave them."

Someone once said, *"Nothing we do, however virtuous, can be accomplished alone; therefore, we must be saved by Love."*

I thank the Lord there are people out there like you! God bless you!