

The Twenty First Sunday of Ordinary Time

Luke 13:22-30

Dear Friends,

Religion is a very tricky business. A lot of selfishness takes place in the name of Jesus. Often, what seems to be, really is not, and what really is, does not seem to be. St. Luke is very strong in presenting this theme of reversal. Today, we close the Gospel with another expression of Luke's often repeated theme of reversal, ***"For behold, some are last who will be first and, some are first, who will be last."*** (13:30)

There are many who call themselves Christian and often image themselves as Christian warriors. Their main job is to attack the "sins" of others. They are full time against abortion and homosexuals, others are crusaders against the racists and those opposing immigration reform. They are occupied completely pointing out how horrible other people are. Others make it a full time job finger pointing at certain people who do not follow the minor laws of the Church in the liturgy and sacraments.

Jesus is pretty clear on these issues. ***"Why do you notice the splinter in your brother's eye but do not perceive the wooden beam in your own eye...You hypocrite, remove the wooden beam from your own eye first."*** (Mt. 7:3-5)

It is very clear that being an usher or lector or Eucharistic minister or a member of the liturgy committee or school board are not the main concerns. Jesus invites us to be humble and forgiving servants in a Church of sinners seeking the mercy of God together.

St Teresa of Avila has two fundamental teachings that address today's Gospel. Jesus is telling us to listen to his message and live it. To do this, we need to know ourselves. Teresa repeats over and over that the journey to God is first and foremost guided by self knowledge. We need to know we are sinners, but sinners who are loved and forgiven. That is why she says the story of our lives is always, in the final analysis, the story of God's mercy.

This theme of mercy has been at the center of Pope Francis' message that has delighted and inspired the world. He said recently that to be a Christian is not to never fall down and fail. It is to get up again and embrace God's mercy that is always there for us.