

Sunday, August 3, 2008

Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Isaiah 55: 1-3; Psalm 145; Romans 8: 35, 37-39; Matthew 14: 13-21

While most Christians believe (and it is in Scripture) that Jesus came to save us from our sins, Franciscan theology offers us another way to look at the meaning of the incarnation. God is so abundantly generous, so full of life, that God wants to share that abundant life with creatures. We hear that in God's invitation to come to the waters, to milk, wine and bread—all freely given. As the psalmist teaches: "You open your hand" and all good flows from God's generosity. Nothing can thwart God's gift of Christ to us; "nothing can separate us from the love of God"—not even "mortal" sin. If we have not understood yet, Jesus puts flesh on God's desire to give us all. He takes two fish and five loaves and creates an abundance for 5,000 men (men are so attracted to him!), not counting women and children.

How, where, when do you experience God's abundant life poured out? Savor each memory, roll it around your tongue like fresh water, roll it around your heart until gratitude begins to flow. Sit quietly with that array of memories and let the generosity of God fill you again.

We come to you for every good thing, God of abundance, but so many of your creatures are desperate for fresh water. Save us from our greed and grasping, our misuse of all your gifts, but especially water.

Monday, August 4, 2008

Jeremiah 28:1-17; Psalm 119; Matthew 14: 22-36

"Lord, save me," cries Peter who tested Jesus, "if it is you, command me to walk on water." Jeremiah tests the prophet Hananiah who told the people that Babylon would be defeated. How do we test our own religious experience? How do we know if a prophet, even ourselves, speaks the Word of God? Jeremiah says when peace comes, we know it is a true word. When we cry out to Jesus for saving, placing our religious experience before him, we ask him to be a two edged sword, sorting our motivations. If love grows, our hearts expand and deepen, then we can be fairly sure the experience is of God.

Hear Jesus say directly to you as he did to Peter, "Come." Let that word roll around your ears, your mind, your heart. Where does he want you to come? Ask him and wait in silence to see what bubbles up from deep within you. Feel the bubbles! Respond.

May your word of truth be always in our hearts and on our lips. Save us, free us to be honest in word, in action. Keep us always authentic in our dealings. Thank you!

Tuesday, August 5, 2008

Jeremiah 30: 1-2, 12-15, 18-22; Psalm 102; Matthew 15: 1-2, 10-14

Although this Thursday we will read of the new covenant God promises through Jeremiah, it is foreshadowed here. Merrymaking, fruitfulness, thanksgiving will be our response to God's favor. Jesus quickly deflates the Pharisees' condemnation of his friends for not observing ritual washings. Instead Jesus looks to the heart, and how the heart speaks, to discern true purity.

How do you respond to God's favor in your life? And how is your heart today? What rises to your lips? Joy, anger, fear, grief, love? Show your heart to Jesus and ask for healing of your heart and the heart of the world.

By your cross and resurrection, you have set us free. You are the savior of the world, and how much we need your saving grace, your favor. Help us! Thank you.

Wednesday, August 6, 2008

Feast of the Transfiguration

Daniel 7: 9-10, 13-14; Psalm 97; Matthew 17: 1-9

Daniel offers a vision of God as the Ancient One (no wonder so many image God as a bearded grandfather). "One like a human being" (traditionally translated Son of Man) is presented to him, and the Ancient One presents him with power and dominion. The gospel narrates Jesus' transformation on Mount Tabor, flanked by Elijah and Moses. "We behold the glory of God, shining on the face of Jesus," as the song puts it. Yet this glory leads Jesus to shed his power and dominion on his last night on earth to kneel before his friends and wash their feet.

How does the glory of God shine on your face? How does the power of God work through your weakness? Look at Jesus, shining with the glory of God, looking at you, tenderly and humbly, ready to wash your feet.

Thank you for your Son, the beloved. May we always listen to him. May we come to share the divinity of him who emptied himself to share our humanity.

August 7, 2008

Jeremiah 31: 31-34; Psalm 51; Matthew 16: 13-23

Through Jeremiah God promises a new covenant, a new way of knowing God, with an interior and heart-felt law binding them in love. The psalm begs for this new heart and faithful spirit. After Peter confesses that Jesus is the Messiah, Jesus throws over the old covenant's hope for a kingly Messiah to promise that his Messiahship will be marked by suffering. It will be a new covenant in his blood, our liturgy announces day after day.

How do you know God? How do you know Jesus? How do you know the Spirit? “Create in me a new heart, and put a good and faithful spirit within me....Give me back the joy of your salvation.” Pray for all those who have no knowledge of God, no heart-felt experience of God, and no joy.

Show us how we can find you in the weakest and most forlorn of those who people our TV screens during the news. Let all nations know you and rejoice in your love.

Friday, August 8, 2008

Nahum 1: 15, 2:2, 3:1-3, 6-7; Deuteronomy 32; Matthew 16: 24-28

Jesus moves from announcing his suffering and death yesterday to telling us today in our continuous reading that we will be in the same straits, taking up our own cross. Like him (and we know how his story ends), if we lose our life we will truly find it. Nahum tells of God’s avenging Israel’s enemies, while “on the mountain tops are the feet of those who bring good news.”

What is the cross in your life that you have been bearing? Show it to Jesus and ask him to share it. What is the good news in your life that you want to shout from the mountain tops? Share that with him too. Today, look for the dying/rising pattern of Christian life.

If we have died with you, Lord, we shall live with you, Lord. Open our eyes to see this mystery in our daily lives, to accept the hard and the joyous with trust in you.

Saturday, August 9, 2008

Habakkuk 1:12-2:4; Psalm 9; Matthew 17:14-20

The prophet hears God promise a vision. Perhaps God does not have a will, definitely not a blueprint, but perhaps not even a preference that we have to search out. God has a vision. “The dream you have for me, my Lord, is only a shadow of your dream for me.” God has a vision for the world, and we are invited to share it. Jesus shows us that God’s vision is to cast out evil from people, from the earth. He heals a child who throws himself into the fire and into the water. God’s vision is of peace, peace within and peace in the world.

What is God’s dream for you? Ask God. Be still, wait, listen. What is God’s passionate desire for your life? Wait, listen. What is God’s vision for our planet, the water, air, soil? Join that vision in your imagination, “a peaceable kin-dom,” and contemplate it.

Deepen our faith, Jesus, so that we can cast out evil, so that we can be bearers of God’s vision, that we can be instruments of peace and unity. Thank you.