

Sunday, July 27, 2008

Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

I Kings 3: 5-12; Psalm 119; Romans 8:28-30; Matthew 13: 44-52

“Understanding to discern what is right” is what King Solomon asks of God, who highly approves. Not riches, not revenge, but an understanding heart. In the psalm, gold and silver cannot compare with God’s Word and mercy. Jesus offers three parables about the kin-dom of heaven which is like hidden treasure, like a pearl, and like a net catching all kinds of sea creatures which the fishermen have to separate. That is the simple meaning of discernment: separating. On the other hand, Paul writes of everything coming together, and all for our good. Paul names Jesus the firstborn of many brothers and sisters in this new family of God.

God asks you what gift you want. How do you respond? What do you most deeply desire? When have you experienced that “all things work together for your good,” as Paul expresses it? If you cannot remember, ask the Spirit to bring these situations to mind and then respond to God’s goodness to you.

Let the unfolding of your words give us light, Jesus. Help us keep our eyes on you, our light, our pioneer, our unifier, our peace-giver. Thank you.

Monday, July 28, 2008

Jeremiah 13:1-11; Deuteronomy 32; Matthew 13: 31-35

The prophet not only speaks but listens. Jeremiah listens to God’s command to wear a dirty loin cloth, go to the Euphrates River (and now that the news is about Iraq we know how far from Israel that journey would take Jeremiah!), bury the cloth, return later when it is thoroughly rotten and say to Israel: I wanted you to cling to me, but you would not listen. The canticle from Deuteronomy likens God to a mother who bears Israel, and gives birth. Jesus tells stories that show how the kin-dom grows from small beginnings of mustard seed and bit of yeast.

How, when, why do you cling to God? How is God like a mother to you? When have you experienced a small beginning, and watched it mushroom? As the Spirit reminds you of these events, how will you respond?

We cling to you, God of grace, that you may make us one people, “a praise and a glory” to you. All we do today in word or in work or in listening, we do to glorify you.

Tuesday, July 29, 2008

Feast of Martha of Bethany

Jeremiah 14: 17-22; Psalm 79; Luke 10: 38-42

Martha may only rate a memorial, but she does have a special gospel to celebrate her feast. First, Jeremiah laments: “We look for peace but find no good; for a time of

healing but there is terror instead. We acknowledge our wickedness.” The psalm asks that the groans of prisoners be heard by God. Finally we come to Martha, welcoming Jesus into her home. It is unusual for a woman to have a home in Israel at that time, seemingly unmarried, and with an unmarried sister. Women were married about age 12, and we can hardly believe these sisters are that young. Why are they alone? Widows go to the home of their husbands. Is it possible that these two special friends of Jesus are divorced, cast off by their husbands?

Let us pray today for all those who are imprisoned unjustly, or who are caught in loveless marriages. Let us pray for all those who are cast aside by their spouses, that their hearts may be healed. Let us pray for peacemakers who work so diligently for peace and find terror instead.

We too acknowledge our sin, merciful God. In our fear, we create war instead of peace, violence instead of healing. Forgive us our international, national and personal violence..

Wednesday, July 30, 2008

Jeremiah 15: 10, 16-21; Psalm 59; Matthew 13: 44-46

First Jeremiah laments the day he was born, then tells how the word of the Lord was joy to him, and concludes his woes, addressing God: “Why is my pain unceasing, my wound incurable, refusing to be healed? Truly, you are to me like a deceitful brook whose waters fail.” Jeremiah takes joy in the words of the Lord and in the parable a treasure hidden in the field causes joy when found. “In his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.”

Both readings are passionate. When have you asked God, “Why?” When accused God of being like a brook whose waters fail? Dared to be angry with God? How did it all turn out for you? Did you ever find a treasure that sent you sky-high with joy? Remember the events of rage and rejoicing and see them in the light of our dying/rising pattern. Bring them to offer at the next Eucharist you celebrate.

By your cross and resurrection you have set us free. You are the savior of the world! By our dying and rising with you, our lamenting and rejoicing, help us help you.

Thursday, July 31, 2008

St. Ignatius of Loyola

Jeremiah 18: 1-6; Psalm 146; Matthew 13: 47-52

How appropriate these readings are to commemorate Ignatius. Jeremiah is told to go to the potter’s house and watch what happens when the clay is spoiled; the potter re-fashions it. In the gospel, the fishermen pull in all kinds of sea creatures and need to discern which are healthy, which are spoiled. In his Spiritual Exercises Ignatius asks us to remember first that we are mere creatures, dependent on God. When we have absorbed

that foundational truth, God will begin to re-shape our hearts. We will discern, sort through, all that leads us closer to Christ, until eventually we will find God in all things.

What is your experience of being re-shaped by God, transformed by the Spirit? When, where, how did that happen? Remember and respond. What choices have you made that brought you closer to Christ, life-choices and just the decisions of yesterday? Remember and respond.

Re-shape our hearts, Creator God. Help us rejoice in our dependence on you. Enlighten our choices in the light of Christ, and help us to find you in all things.