

## Commentary on the Gospel for Wed, Jul 12th 2017

In John's Gospel, Jesus asserts that the bread that nourishes him is doing the Father's will. When we pray the "Our Father" we ask that God's will be accomplished on earth as in heaven, and then we pray for our daily ration of bread (that is, to do God's will today). When we consider daily ration or daily bread in this way, we are not just asking for material need to be met, but we are asking that God will accomplish through us whatever he desires, so that His Kingdom comes now, not just in the future glory.

In the Genesis reading from today's Mass we discover that the siblings who betrayed their youngest brother, Joseph, were without their bread (a ration of grain would supply it). So clearly in this situation of abusing the one they were responsible for, they lost what they had and were brought to the brink of starving. But Joseph, who had already been brought low and then rescued by continued obedience to the Father's will, is now the practitioner of God's Mercy – the essence of God's will, according to Pope Francis.

So how do we know, on a daily basis, what we must do to accomplish the Father's Will; our "Daily bread"? Saint Ignatius offered a very specific way of seeking and discerning God's will in our lives, which begins with a consistent effort to reflect on the events surrounding us, the emotions and thoughts that we have, the "signs of the times" in our world, and certainly, the voice of the teaching authority of the Church.

Sometimes it is challenging to discover God's will in our own lives and in the world around us, but the call to be merciful – even to enemies or those who seek to harm us – is one clear expression of God's intention and desire throughout the Old and New Testaments. To be like God is to be merciful. Joseph is his most authentic self when he extends compassion and mercy toward his older brothers who sought, out of jealousy, to destroy him (and materially enriched themselves in the process as the early part of this text tells us).

The invitation I hear during these warm days of midsummer is the invitation to reflect deeply on the people of my life that have blocked my path, spoken harshly, been insulting or even abusive – and to ask for God's grace to let the feelings of resentment, anger, or, God forbid, revenge, that may lurk in my heart to be disclosed and dismissed. Only then can I really prosper with the spirituality of the "daily bread" of doing God's will meaningfully.

The Gospel today witnesses to the surprising realization that Judas Iscariot was given the gifts of God to accomplish healing, evangelization, and peace-making by driving out spirits of hatred and division. If he, who chose to betray Jesus to murderers, could exercise those gifts of the Father's Will, so can my enemies, and who am I to judge them as unworthy of those gifts? Another reason to extend mercy is that it expands the effects of God's Will much farther than any of us can do alone. God multiplies mercy by forgiving us, asking us to forgive, and then empowering others we have forgiven to offer mercy beyond themselves.

Lord, as I pray Psalm 33 today let my heart cry out for your mercy toward me and the gift of mercy to be given by me to others. May your will be my bread and the ration of grain of your mercy be extended throughout every land where there is a spiritual famine!

“Lord, let your mercy be on us, as we place our trust in you.” (psalm response for the liturgy)

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