

## Commentary on the Gospel for Thu, Aug 31st 2017

The overall focus of Ordinary Time Liturgy is the work of Christ in accomplishing the Father's mission. We spend this lengthy period each year trying to understand and put into practice the pattern of God's work in God's manner, remembering the adage that "the medium is the message."

Today is an Ordinary Time Wednesday and the readings challenge me to consider the important little truth that God's perspective on the Reign of God is not the same as mine. The Psalm gives a clue why God's way is different. The Psalmist asserts: "God beholds all who dwell on the earth; he who fashioned the heart of each, he who knows all their works." So to start with, God has an "insider" view of each and every human person. God knows not only what "makes us tick," God knows at what speed every individual person and whole communities are capable of moving and growing. So God's way of working out the divine mission is glacially slow in some instances and moves with the rapidity of a lightning bolt at other times (as I see it).

Furthermore, the actors chosen to do certain jobs are not my choices. God picks servants (minister is the Latin word for servant) to accomplish his tasks without consulting my criteria of perfect ministers.

For one who wants to labor with Jesus in this work, this seemingly erratic pace is disconcerting to say the least and the difficulties of working with a range of fellow laborers is a team manager's nightmare.

Let's imagine Paul writing to a contemporary parish community about its feuds arising from the work of a newly appointed pastor. We could call the community "All Saints" – since one supposes that all the members of the Church are Baptized into Christ and therefore "saints."

Beloved brothers and sisters in Christ,

What is all this uproar and contention? You have been baptized into Christ, you are called saints for a good reason, so why are you acting like sinners? Why are some of you saying that you follow Fr. Kelly and some of you say you belong to Fr. Schuetz. Fr. Kelly did some wonderful pastoral work for many of you. He witnessed your weddings, buried your parents, and baptized your children. Now Fr. Schuetz wants to start a school to form those children more deeply, and develop a language and housing process to welcome the new immigrants. Both priests are ministers through whom you became believers. Each is merely a servant of God's mission to bring you to salvation. God is doing the good work in you. The one who plants and the one who waters are working on the same team!

Whoever says that she is a follower of Fr. Kelly's way, or he who says he is going Fr. Schuetz' way is acting like a sinner, not a saint. The good priests (and you) are merely workers in God's parish – now get busy and start acting like saints who have grown up, and can take on the heavy work.

Your servant Paul

Today's Gospel shows yet another example of how God's way is not mine. Jesus is not staying to finish up all the work in one place, but moving on to another village or town. What is disconcerting about God's way of doing things is that it is God's way . . . not mine! Hmmm, maybe I better look back into the qualifications for serving God's reign and not my own. Perhaps I could practice discernment a bit better . . . or maybe patience . . . or possibly humility?? Dear God, this business of

serving your Kingdom is not just not my way, so maybe I need some more “Ordinary Time” to discover your way?

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