

Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle A

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Scriptures: Wisdom 12: 13, 16–19; Psalm 85: 5-16; Romans 8: 26-27, Matthew 13: 24-43

In our first reading from the Book of Wisdom, we hear the wisdom given the Israelites to hold fast to their faith despite the pressures of living in a foreign land. Even though oppressed and far away from home, God gives them a hope that's rooted in his mercy and love. It is a message that is joy to our ears in this twenty-first century. No matter where we find ourselves in living this life, God is always present to his people. It doesn't matter what road we've traveled or how far we are away from home, God extends an invitation for us to return home – to come to our senses.

Throughout salvation history, God's people have shared their stories about a God who led them by his mighty arm. It is a history of a God who showers His mercy on all of creation – the good and the bad alike.

While living in a society where injustice abounds and seeing with our own eyes the devastation that injustice heaps upon God's people, it becomes easy for us to question the omnipotent power of God. In the throes of poverty and despair, we begin to question God's wisdom. When we feel that injustice is rewarded and tolerated above everything else, the questions of what is God doing in our time are readily on our lips. We question God's wisdom, when the rich get richer and the poor become poorer. We become cynics as to whether our lives, and whether our world can be transformed by the power of God's Holy Spirit.

Yet, when we get a glimpse of God's mercy and grace; when we see God's glory with our own eyes; we come to our senses. We begin to live what we know and understand and that is our God is merciful, kind, patient and loving. When we remember what God has already done, it is then that we begin to act in a faith that believes God can do the impossible. It is in this belief that we walk the walk of faith with confidence. As we are bathed in the mercy of God – in a God who has promised to never abandon us – we face the storms and the trials of life with a confidence that sustains a weary soul. Because of this great gift, we offer our worship and praise to the God who has showered us with forgiveness and love. We, in turn, extend forgiveness and love to one another.

In Paul's Letter to the Romans, we hear that it is God's Spirit that strengthens us in the midst of oppression and injustice. It is God's Holy Spirit that empowers us to go through the trials of life. It is the Spirit of the Living God who enables us to stay the course of faith in the throes of adversity and pain. What can keep us going, when we've lost our job and can't see our way through it? What can keep us going when our legislators see fit to abandon us when we need them the most? It is God's love that compels us to run the race of faith!

It is in this faith that we come to believe that the reign of God is at hand. No matter what we see around us. No matter what others may say to us or do to us. Our God is in control! We are able to see God's reign by how we choose to live our lives. There are too many examples in our history that shed light on what the consequences are of choosing another way. We only need to look back on the history of the church and secular society to name what those consequences have been and can be.

The intolerance and hatred of the other can lead and has led to oppression, slavery, genocide, torture and war. We understand that when left to our own wisdom, the effects of our decisions have had a lasting impact upon generations of people.

In this twenty-first century, we must make intentional efforts to break the cycle of intolerance and hatred. It is our responsibility as parents, as pastors, and as the holy people of God to eradicate this evil. We can no longer stand idle as injustice, intolerance and hatred is peddled as a virtue. It is in times like these that we come to realize what it really means to be followers' of Christ.

We are a people who are called to be witnesses of God's saving power. We do that by making a concerted effort to live and to love in a way that reflects the omnipotence of the God Most High. For even when we can't see it with our own eyes, the reign of God is at work in the world and in us. May we, in the power of God's Holy Spirit, do all that we can to love one another as God has loved us.