

Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

There are some people that will not attempt something because they think that it will be too hard or take too much time and effort. They will avoid doing something even if it is for their own benefit. For example, many people will not take the time to exercise because it takes time and effort to do this, even though they know that exercising will benefit their overall health. It's much easier skipping the exercise and doing something else – like watching TV, or eating, or playing on the computer, or communicating with friends on some form of social media. There is nothing necessarily wrong with these activities; however, the more we use choose other activities besides exercise the more we get out of shape, and for many people this also means gaining weight.

We can get out of shape in our spiritual life as well. The less time that we spend in prayer, the more that we get out of shape in our spiritual lives. Much like when we try to start exercising again, we feel the aches and pains of sore and tired muscles, so also we will experience difficulty when we try to start praying again after a long absence. It won't be easy. It will be a struggle at first.

In our first reading today, Moses more or less warns about this (Deut 30:10-14). Moses is warning the people to listen the voice of the Lord and follow His commandments. It is not high up in the sky so that you cannot reach it. It is not across the sea so that you cannot get to it. "No," Moses says, "it is something very near to you, already in your mouths and in your hearts; you have only to carry it out." Moses is saying to the people, "Don't make excuses not to pray and listen to God and follow in His ways." The excuses, "It's too hard"; or "It's too remote for me"; or "I don't have the time"; are all ways of avoiding spending some time with God.

God is already in our hearts. God is with us all the time. We don't have to go looking for Him. All that we have to do is turn inwards to find Him. All that we have to do is turn inwards and pray to Him. This is what Moses meant when he said that "it is something very near to you, already in your mouths and in your hearts; you only have to carry it out."

One other reason why we don't want to become spiritually lazy in our prayer life, is that lack of spending some time in prayer can also lead to hardness of heart. The less contact that we have with the Lord the less likely that we will become like Him. Have you ever seen a child act just like his or her mother or father? That is because the child spends a lot of time with the parent and watches what the parent does and says. The child will start to act just like the parent in many ways. It is in this same way that we will become more Christ-like the more that we spend time with Him and learn His ways. We will learn to act like Jesus, and speak as He speaks.

A good example of this is the parable of the good Samaritan in our Gospel reading today (Lk 10:25-37). For some commentators on the Scriptures the good Samaritan represented Jesus (e.g. St. Augustine). The man who was beaten up and left for dead represented humanity. So, for these commentators, the man who was left half-dead by the roadside represents us. We are the injured, the broken, and the one in need of help. Jesus, the good Samaritan figure in the parable, comes along and sees us. He is moved with compassion in His heart, and He stops to help us. He takes care of our wounds and leads us to safety. As we heard in the responsorial psalm, "Turn to the Lord in your need, and you will live."

As I mentioned earlier, we are asked to listen to the voice of the Lord and follow His commandments. By spending time in prayer and becoming closer to Jesus, we become more like Him. As we heard in the second reading, "Christ Jesus is the image of the invisible God." (Col 1:15) In the Incarnation Jesus became the visible image of the invisible God. In our own time, Jesus is invisible to us, so this means that we are to be the image of Christ for the world. Just as Jesus is the image of the invisible God, we are the image to the world of the invisible Jesus. This means that we are to show compassion to those in need. To show mercy and offer help to those that may be struggling. To be like Jesus in bringing about reconciliation and try to heal the wounds of division. Jesus says, "As I have treated you with love and mercy and compassion, go and do likewise with each other." By doing this, we will be following Jesus faithfully and helping to bring about the Kingdom of God.