

31st Sunday in Ordinary Time

November 5, 2017

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The Word of God today makes it clear that religion is above all what God has done for us: it's thanking God for the countless expressions of his love for us. Jesus praises the humility of people like St. Paul, who realize that everything good they receive comes to them from God, the Father of all good gifts. St. Paul asks the Corinthians and each of us: "What do you have that was not given to you? And if it was given, how can you boast as though it were not?"

Today's psalm compares God's love for us to that of a mother tenderly holding her infant. When we were baptized, each of us became children of God, heirs to the kingdom of heaven. God whispered to us the same words he said to Jesus at his Baptism: "You are my beloved". For this awesome gift we should give continual praise and thanks to God. But as we grow older, many of us are no longer content to be children of God. Like the Pharisees, we get caught up in the temptation of seeking praise for our accomplishments. We make our self esteem dependent on the affirmation of other people. Jesus criticized this attitude of self promotion in the Pharisees: they were always trying to impress people with their good deeds and they boasted about them, seeking always their own glory and honor rather than God's.

Today Jesus invites us to see that our glory is not in what WE DO, but in who we are—and we are "the beloved of God" who loves us and holds us close to him as a mother holds her child. Religion is first of all, recognizing our giftedness, then praising and thanking God for his love. We who are the beloved of God can say the same prayer that our Mother Mary proclaimed in her Magnificat: "The Almighty has done great things for me and holy is His name!"

Religion is what we do for God, especially in loving our neighbor as ourselves as we were reminded in last week's scriptures. One way to be charitable towards our neighbor this month is to remember the faithful departed, especially departed parishioners of St. Edward and all our departed loved ones. Church tradition sets aside the month of November to offer prayers on behalf of the deceased believing that this is a charitable thing to do as members of the communion of saints. Our faith reminds us that our prayers and sacrifices can help our faithful departed in purgatory as they are being purified from their sins and imperfections to enter fully into the joyful presence of God. I'm sure many of you say special prayers for your departed mother and father.

The scriptural parallel of God's love is compared to a mother's care for her baby. As a baby is totally dependent on it's mother, God is here for us his children. More than many people in recent history, Mother Teresa became a caring mother to the downtrodden. She maintained a beautiful balance between the practice of her religious faith which consists of praising and thanking God for His love and loving our neighbor as ourselves. Let me close by quoting Mother Teresa who once said: "Each person's mission is a mission of love...begin in the place where you are, with the people closest to you. Make your homes centers of compassion and forgive endlessly. Let no one ever come to you without coming away better and happier..."

At the hour of death when we come face to face with God, we are going to be judged on LOVE: not on how much we have done, but how much love we put into the doing."

May we hear God's words "You are my beloved" and may our actions prove it!