

17TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, 26 JULY
2020

GOD FIRST: HAVING OUR PRIORITY RIGHT

Dear brothers and sisters, Last Sunday, the readings presented a theme; God is merciful and gracious. Knowing this about God is a source of joy and hope. The readings assure us that God is patient and will forgive our sins and failings if we turn to him. Anyone of us who labors under a heavy burden of guilt of past sins and mistakes, should, with contrite heart bring them to the Lord. These sins would be instantly forgiven most especially in the Sacrament of Confession. The Lord expects us to not procrastinate in embracing his mercy. God does not want us to ignore opportunities for turning to him before death comes. It is too late! Remaining unrepentant till death has tragic consequences. Our Lord did not mince words about this: “The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will collect out of his kingdom all

who cause others to sin and all evildoers. They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth” (Matthew 13:41-42). This brings us to today's theme; **God first: Having our priorities right**. We belong to God the Father, creator, redeemer and sanctifier. This merciful and gracious God loves with a passionate undying love. It behooves us to love him in return by giving him the priority and primacy that is his due. It is very important to remind ourselves that God is not one of the many items we can choose from. God is the first and last. He is the be all and end It is in Him that we live, move and have our being.

The readings this Sunday invite us to have our priorities; To keep the first things first. What is the first in our lives? God is. Many things clamor for our attention and many more things attract us. In the midst of this myriad of things we must hold on to the One who holds all things in being. This makes everything fall in place. The Word of God says, “All you who are thirsty, come to the water! You who have

no money, come, receive grain and eat; Come, without paying and without cost, drink wine and milk!” (Isaiah 55:1-3).

In the first reading, Solomon, the newly anointed king of the United kingdom of ancient Israel, showed an inspiring example of having his priorities right. He chose God. In the gospel, the man who found a hidden treasure and the merchant searching for a fine pearl did likewise. They chose God!

In the first reading, the young king Solomon understood what the priorities in life were. He asked God, “Give your servant... an understanding heart to judge your people to distinguish right from wrong” (1Kings 3:9). Solomon did not ask for long life, riches, and death for his enemies. He asked for the gift of wisdom. What is wisdom? Wisdom and Word translate the Greek word *logos* or *sophia*., Logos is God. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God (John 1:1). By asking for wisdom, Solomon asked for God. One with God has everything. In the gospel, three parables are

presented to show what the kingdom of God is like. These parables give insight into the kingdom. But the kingdom came in person of Jesus Christ. Jesus is the treasure and the fine pearl that is worth selling everything I have. What hinders me from doing like that man who finds buried treasure and the merchant who finds fine pearls? Is there anything in my life that I prefer to Jesus? Do I prefer my anger, non-committal faith, shyness, addictions, etc to Jesus? The Lord says, "Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other.. . To me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear. 'Only in the LORD, it shall be said of me, are righteousness and strength"

Kelly Carpenter and Mark Hayes nailed the priority of Jesus in a song:

Draw me close to you. Never let me go.
I lay it all down again. To hear you say
that I'm your friend. You are my desire.

No one else will do. 'Cause nothing else
can take your place. To feel the warmth
of your embrace. Help me find the way.
Bring me back to you. You're all I want.
You're all I've ever needed. You're all I
want. Help me know you are near

Could one whose life is centered on God be at loss
anytime? Never. “We know that all things work for
good for those who love God, who are called
according to his purpose” (Romans 8:28). Anchoring
our faith, hope and love on God, the First and the Last,
we pray: “My Lord and my God, take from me
everything that distances me from you. My Lord and
my God, give me everything that brings me closer to
you. My Lord and my God, detach me from myself to
give my all to you.”¹

¹ St. Nicholas of Flüe; cf. *Mt* 5:29-30; 16:24-26.