

2017

- “*He is the Son of God*”, John the Baptist proclaims today... something that we, by our very presence here, proclaim with him.
- This is the very basis of our Christian faith...and why we are called “Christ”-ians.
- In the Trinitarian mystery of One God and Three Persons, there was never a “time” when the Father existed alone, but always is Father, Son and Holy Spirit—for eternity, going backwards and forwards, *ad infinitum*—similar to how your body has never existed alone, but always there is your spiritual soul (which is the animating principle of the body)...united as one. We, too, by the way, are eternal—not in the past, but forward into the future.
- The unity of God in eternity is attested to in John 1 most eloquently of all—speaking of the Son specifically: “*He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through him...*” (John 1:2-3 RSV)
-
- And thus all is created by God...held in existence by God...and, therefore, absolutely dependent upon God...and, hence, the very purpose and single obligation of our lives is to do the will of God.
- So...there can be no “opting out” from God...any more than there is no “opting out” from the physical laws which hold our atoms together. We cannot say: “Well...I refuse to obey the law of gravity!” and walk off a cliff without the normal gravitational consequence.
- Actually, we can more easily defy physical laws than to defy God’s law and will...for as Jesus assures us: “*Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.*” (Mark 13:31)

-
- We would call anyone a “fool” who thought to build a house in the sky...walls of liquid water, floating upon a cloud...and telling us: “Well, I’m opting out of the laws of gravity and fluid dynamics. Those are inconvenient to me.”
- And yet...is that not what we do when we plan to ignore the will of God—laid down in His Word and instruction to us?...deciding for ourselves (in contradiction to His Word) what He should and shouldn’t approve? Is that not the very fault and sin of Adam and Eve?
-
- And thus we come to one of the primary themes of our readings today: that of obedience.
- Oh...how we hate that word in our time, regardless of context. Our reason knows order is necessary, but our souls are anarchists.
- The word “obedience” conjures in our imaginations images of slaves under the lash...shackles and chains limiting our freedom.
- Well, if that’s the case, O parents...why do you wish your children to obey you? For some sort of perverse desire for control of the weaker by yourself, the stronger?
- Or...is it not rather because of love? For you, in your much greater life’s experience and knowledge, understand the dangers and challenges which face your little ones?
- Now, if only you can get your children to realize that simple logic!
-

- Is that not the very reason why God longs for us to obey Him?...He knowing the pitfalls of our earthly existence far better than any of us ever could...and which has even experienced in Jesus, as Hebrews reminds us: “...we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. (Hebrews 4:15 RSV)
- And, as Isaiah reminds us: “Can a mother forget her infant, be without tenderness for the child of her womb? Even should she forget, I will never forget you...” (Isaiah 49:15 NAB)...and St. John tells us: “In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins.” (1John 4:10 RSV)...to die for us...and as Jesus says...and as we instinctively understand: “Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. (John 15:13 RSV)
- What more do we need...what more could we ask for...than this? What more can there be than God going to die upon the cross for us, to prove His love for us? So why do we resist Him?
-
- Yet...with our faith and actions, we choose Him...or not. As the book of Sirach says: “Before a man are life and death; he is given whichever he chooses.” (Sirach 15:17) Our eternal fate is entirely up to us.
- Yes...Jesus says He came to lay down His life for His friends...but with the caveat: “You are my friends if you do what I command you.” (John 15:14)
-
- People often ask: “How can a loving God send anyone to Hell?!”

- He doesn't, really, I think. He just respects our own choice: if we choose Him in life, He keeps us with Him; if we reject Him in life, He respects that, too.
- I forget what movie it was when I was young...but there was a character talking to fallen angel/demon who was roaming the earth, and the man asked: "Why are you here? This is not Hell." And the fallen angel responded: "When you have known the absolute joy of Heaven, anything else IS Hell."
- Well...union with God IS Heaven...and, in the end, everything that is not of God IS Hell...for the absence of God is the total absence of love...of joy...of anything good whatever.
-
- Yes...in our day and age, we hate that word "obedience".
- St. Paul calls himself a slave of Christ Jesus...but his—as ours should be—a slavery of love; indeed, a slavery to love itself...for Jesus is God, and God is love.
- Our obedience to God is not base servility to tyrannical master, but rather the obedience of the wise and perceptive child to a munificent Father—who longs for the child's good, and longs for His continued presence with Him forever.
-
- St. Clement I writes: "*God's blessing must be our objective, and the way to win it our study.*" (Breviary, Vol III, p. 75)
- How do we obtain His blessing? By doing His will.

- And how do know His will? Easy. Jesus—God—established our Church as His teacher on earth (ref. Mt 28:20), and gives us His own Word in scripture. These are our sure road.
- Realizing this, let us go forth today with the prayer of our responsorial psalm: “...*ears open to obedience you gave me...to do your will, O my God, is my delight...Here am I, Lord; I come to do your will.*”

Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

Lectionary: 64

Reading 1 IS 49:3, 5-6

The LORD said to me: You are my servant,
Israel, through whom I show my glory.
Now the LORD has spoken
who formed me as his servant from the womb,
that Jacob may be brought back to him
and Israel gathered to him;
and I am made glorious in the sight of the LORD,
and my God is now my strength!
It is too little, the LORD says, for you to be my servant,
to raise up the tribes of Jacob,
and restore the survivors of Israel;
I will make you a light to the nations,
that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth.

Responsorial Psalm PS 40:2, 4, 7-8, 8-9, 10

R. (8a and 9a) **Here am I, Lord; I come to do your will.**

I have waited, waited for the LORD,
and he stooped toward me and heard my cry.
And he put a new song into my mouth,
a hymn to our God.

R. **Here am I, Lord; I come to do your will.**

**Sacrifice or offering you wished not,
but ears open to obedience you gave me.**

Holocausts or sin-offerings you sought not;
then said I, "Behold I come."

R. **Here I am, Lord; I come to do your will.**

"In the written scroll it is prescribed for me,
**to do your will, O my God, is my delight,
and your law is within my heart!"**

R. **Here am I, Lord; I come to do your will.**

I announced your justice in the vast assembly;
I did not restrain my lips, as you, O LORD, know.

R. **Here am I, Lord; I come to do your will.**

Reading 2 1 COR 1:1-3

Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God,
and Sosthenes our brother,
to the church of God that is in Corinth,
to you who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be holy,
with all those everywhere who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours.
Grace to you and peace from God our Father
and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Alleluia JN 1:14A, 12A

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

The Word of God became flesh and dwelt among us.

To those who accepted him,

he gave power to become children of God.

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel JN 1:29-34

John the Baptist saw Jesus coming toward him and said,
"Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.
He is the one of whom I said,
'A man is coming after me who ranks ahead of me
because he existed before me.'
I did not know him,
but the reason why I came baptizing with water
was that he might be made known to Israel."
John testified further, saying,
"I saw the Spirit come down like a dove from heaven
and remain upon him.
I did not know him,
but the one who sent me to baptize with water told me,
'On whomever you see the Spirit come down and remain,
he is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.'
Now I have seen and testified that he is the Son of God."