

Reflection for the 15th Sunday of Ordinary Time

Here we are in the middle of July, and Summer is in full sing. We have been blessed this year in Los Alamos with rains and some wonderful weather. I recently took a short trip to Las Vegas, New Mexico and it was wonderful to see how green it is from Los Alamos to Las Vegas, I was also amazed to see how full Story Lake is. As I was returning to Los Alamos from my short trip, I found myself thinking of the blessing that we can find with rains and wonderful weather, a gift from our loving God. Of course, in central Texas and elsewhere they have experienced flooding from too much rain, and there has been loss of life, so let us keep the families and communities affected by the floods in our prayers.

Today in our reading on the 15th Sunday of Ordinary Time we find a simple but powerful message in the readings we have this Sunday taken from the Book of Deuteronomy, the Letter of St. Paul to the Colossians, and our Gospel Reading from the Gospel of St. Luke. In our First Reading this Sunday from the Old Testament, we hear of Moses speaking to God's Chosen People and saying to them, *"If only you would heed the voice of the Lord, your God, and keep His commandments and statutes that are written in this book of the law, when you return to the Lord, your God, with all your heart and all your soul.* Moses goes on to inform his people that what he is sharing with them is not something that is difficult to discover or understand. This message to embrace God's Commandment and the Statutes of God is something that Moses is convinced is not difficult to find or to understand but might be harder than one might think to follow.

Our Second Reading this Sunday is taken from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Colossians, and St. Paul starts his letter to the Colossians by stating, *"Christ Jesus is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation."* St. Paul is pointing out to all who will listen that Christ Jesus, the Son of God, the Savior of the world, is the starting point in our journey of faith. St. Paul goes on to point out that Jesus is the head of the body, the Church. Where He goes, we follow. Just like with our First Reading, this message from St. Paul is not complicated or difficult to understand. Jesus Christ through his 33 years in this world, one like us in all things but sin, shows us the way.

Finally, we are presented with a Gospel Reading this Sunday taken from the Gospel of Luke that provides us with the parable of the Good Samaritan and the Two Greatest Commandments. This Gospel reading recounts a conversation that Jesus has with a Scholar of the Law. This Scholar asked Jesus what he needs to do to inherit eternal life. Jesus responds by asking the Scholar to answer the question and the Scholar does by saying, *"You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your being, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself."* The Scholar goes on to ask Jesus who his neighbor is, and this is when Jesus shares the parable of the Good Samaritan. Be it the Two Greatest Commandments or the parable of the Good Samaritan, they both contain a simple message that is not difficult to understand but may take a lifetime to truly live.

All our readings this Sunday contain a simple message of how to live as followers of the one true God. So often we can complicate things, and, in the process, we might lose or miss the point of the message. In our First Reading this Sunday taken from the Book of Deuteronomy we hear of Moses reminding God's Chosen People that the message and the call from God is not complicate or difficult, we just need to keep His Commandments and Statutes. This message is affirmed in our Second Reading this Sunday taken from the Letter of St. Paul to the Colossians and our Gospel Reading from the Gospel of Luke. There is nothing wrong with exploring the word of God and attempting to better understand the message of the Lord. But our readings this Sunday remind us not to get lost in the search for understanding or other things but to embrace the message of our Lord on how we must live our daily life. We as individuals and as a people, can get so focused on achieving things in this world that we might forget to focus on what God is calling us to do. This was the challenge that Moses speaks about in our First Reading this Sunday taken from the Book of Deuteronomy. From one generation to the next God has reached out to humanity calling us to embrace a relationship with Him that will lead us to eternal salvation. The path is not complicated but it is simple, it is just a very narrow path that most of us spend a lifetime striving to follow.