

# FROM THE PASTOR'S



Tenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, June 8, 2008 A

## REFLECTIONS ON TODAY'S THREE READINGS

The following reflections on today's readings were written by Alice Camille.

First Reading - Hosea 6:3-6

***What can I do with you, Judah? Your piety is like a morning cloud, like the dew that early passes away.***

*Too many folks say their morning and night prayers, and pray before meals, and in between fill their hours with thoughts, words, and deeds that are not at all pious. Even the most sincere of us can spend an hour in church, only to be cursing our neighbor the moment we get into the parking lot. Piety and reverence are often attitudes that we don and remove like church clothes. Once they're off, anything's possible.*

*How to develop a more constant frame of mind? Number one, stop calling the church building God's house, as if God lives there and nowhere else. Also, remember that God hears everything we say, not just the words we speak in prayer or speak out loud. Actively remind yourself during the day that God is present: at home, in the workplace, on the street, in the friend and in the stranger. Reverence just might become a way of life.*

**Reflection Question:** To what extent is my piety or prayer corrected or not corrected to the way I live my daily life?

Second Reading - Romans 4:18-25

***Abraham did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body. . . And the dead womb of Sarah.***

*Cynical people don't see any point in hoping against hope. Once a situation starts going south, they prefer to abandon ship. So marriages collapse, siblings stop speaking to each other, stockholders ditch their shares, and companies go abroad.*

*Abraham thought differently. Though he was very old and his wife Sarah was beyond childbearing, he hoped against hope for a family and a future. What*

*made the difference between Abraham and the average cynic was trust in God. And something very interesting became of Abraham's faith: it became as good as action, Saint Paul says. An attitude crystallized into an act, and God counted his faith like a deed done. It no longer mattered what old Abraham and Sarah couldn't do. All that mattered is what God can do!*

**Reflection Questions:** have you ever lost hope? If so, what helped you to restore it?

Gospel Matthew 9:9-13

***Jesus heard the Pharisees and said, "Those who are well do not need a physician, but the sick do."***

*To listen to some folks talk, you get the impression that only morally upright people should come to church, only well-dressed folks should enter clothing stores, and the penniless and the hungry shouldn't beg near banks and restaurants. And did you ever know someone who insists on cleaning her house before the cleaning service shows up?*

*I shouldn't talk. I wash my hair before I go to the hairdresser, who promptly washes it again. But Jesus is far more sensible when he says he is comfortable in the company of sinners. Yes, he is the most holy Lord, but he's also the physician of souls. Jesus is in the salvation business, and sinners are the ones who need saving. His love is bigger than human failings, and in fact it's designed for them. Perfect people might consider giving up their pews for those who could use them.*

**Reflections Questions:** On whom or on what group do you tend to look down your nose? For what reason?

**What God wants is mercy, not sacrifice.**

The following reflection on today's gospel was written by Fr. Flor McCarthy.

It's tragic to find religious people devoid of the chief human attribute—compassion for others. This was the chief fault of the Pharisees. Grim, earnest men, they practiced severe virtues while condemning others who did not measure up to their standards.

Once there was a very holy abbot called Anastasius. In fact, he was considered a saint by his fellow desert monks. One day when a monk by the name of James sinned and was told to leave the community, Anastasius got up and walked out with him, saying: 'I too am a sinner.' James, however, did not reform and fell very low. Years later he came to visit Anastasius as he was saying his evening prayer.

'Forgive me for interrupting your prayer and making you break your Rule,' James said.

'Don't worry,' Anastasius replied. "My Rule is to receive you with hospitality.'

And he gave him food and lodgings for the night. Now Anastasius had an old copy of the Bible which was worth quite a bit of money. Seeing the book, James took it with him when he was leaving next morning. When Anastasius realized that he had stolen the book, he didn't follow him, fearing that he might only make him add the sin of perjury to that of theft. James went to a nearby merchant to sell the book, asking a high price.

'Give me the book for a little while so that I can find out whether it's worth that much,' the merchant said.

He took it to Anastasius. Anastasius took one look at it and say, 'Yes, this is a splendid book. In fact it's worth much more.' the buyer came back and told the thief what Anastasius had said.

He asked, 'Was that all he said? Did he make no other remarks?'

'No,' said the merchant, 'he didn't say another word.'

On hearing this, James was deeply moved, and said, 'I've changed my mind. I don't want to sell the book after all'. And he hastened back to Anastasius, and, with tears in his eyes, gave him back the book and begged his forgiveness. Anastasius received him with the same kindness as before.

He simply said, 'I forgive you. Keep the book. Read a little from it each day, and pray to Christ who received sinners like us, and brought them back to God's love and friendship. Now go in peace.'

His fellow monks were surprised to see him wasting his time on someone like James, but he said, 'Tell me, if your robe is torn, will you throw it away?' And they replied, 'No, we will mend it and put it back on.' then he said, 'If you take such care of your robe, will not God be merciful to one who bears his image?'

And the kindness of Anastasius paid off. James changed his life. He returned to the life of a monk and became known for his goodness and holiness.

Anastasius placed kindness, hospitality and mercy towards fellow human beings above the practice of

penance and the observance of his Rule. He modeled himself on Jesus. Jesus sat down and ate with sinners, which means he became their friend.

When a person combines true religion and deep humanity, you have a powerful combination. It's like well-polished mahogany. Here you have true holiness. Such people are other Christs.

To offer sacrifice to God is a great thing. But to show mercy to a fellow human being is an even greater things, and is harder. After offering a sacrifice we feel good; we have done something, chalked up some merit. To show mercy is not easy, especially when the person involved deserves to be punished, and when it is in our power to punish him.

One thing helps: the conviction that we ourselves stand in daily need of God's mercy. Blessed are the merciful' they shall have mercy shown them.

**Reflection Question:** considering all three readings and the above reflections on them, what change of heart do they ask of you and me?

They say if all else fails, surrender it to the Lord. If interested in doing that, the following prayer will help.

## **PRAYER OF ABANDONMENT**

*Father, I abandon myself into your hands;  
do with me as you will.*

*For whatever you do, I thank you;*

*I am ready for all, I accept all.*

*Let your will be done in me as in all  
creatures; I ask nothing else.*

*Into your hands I commend my soul;*

*I give it to you with all the  
love of my heart.*

*I love you and I want to give myself  
into your hands with a trust beyond  
all measure because you are my Father.*

**Charles de Foucauld**

Have a blessed week,

