

August 21, 2016 21st Sunday in Ordinary Time

Give me, O Lord, purity of lips and a clean and innocent heart!

Isaiah 66:18-21

Psalms 117:1-2

Hebrews 12:5-7, 11-13

Luke 13: 22-30

The first reading emphasizes the Lord will send out messengers to all the nations, give a sign, and gather lost brothers and sisters of Israel as an offering. Some of the exiles returning to Jerusalem will be chosen as priests and Levites. These verses offer a positive side of an oracle of judgment.

In the shortest of all psalms all the nations are called to acknowledge the Lord's dominion. The psalmist recognizes the steadfast kindness and fidelity of the Lord towards Israel and this indicates to the world that only Yahweh is the true God.

In the second reading Paul, who has endured many trials, reminds us not to lose heart and not to disdain the Lord's discipline because it eventually brings peace and justice into our lives. When discipline is in progress it may cause pain, not joy, but it will bring the peaceful fruit of righteousness. We are to make straight our paths so that in the image of a runner in a race our lameness does not get worse but is healed and the finish line is possible.



In the Gospel Jesus teaches that many will try to enter the narrow door but will be unable. Many of these lived under the illusion that they were following Jesus but, at best, only had a weak relationship with him. The door will be also be locked to evildoers while the faithful people coming from all directions will take their place at the feast of the kingdom of God.

**Our salvation is promised by the Father,
Worked out for us by the Son,
Found totally in the Holy Spirit.**

There are times when our hands droop and our knees are weak, and often we fail to recognize that God allows trials and hardships for our good. What appears as a cause of grief to us will, in time, lead to a greater peace so long as we open ourselves up to Jesus and his word. Be kind, considerate and understanding to others when you suffer such trials or when you see others in the midst of painful problems. Pray for the well-being and enrichment of all those you come in contact with.

The word "discipline" mentioned in the reading from Hebrews comes from the same root as "disciple," namely the Latin word meaning "to learn." To understand discipleship is to understand that we are to walk in the ways of Jesus, and this we learn through discipline. The straight path to the narrow door is not easy and we often go astray in misleading directions. As Paul says, discipline in progress can be both difficult and painful but corrections most often are.

Pray that we may endure whatever trials may come to us
realizing that God allows them for our good,
and that we may believe in the words of Scripture
that say those whom he loves, he disciplines.

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