



Christ in Our Neighborhood

21st Sunday in Ordinary Time

Prayer

Loving and Generous God, You call us by name and ask us to follow You. Help us grow in the love and service of our Church. Give us the energy and courage of Your Spirit to shape its future. Grant us faith-filled leaders who embrace Christ's Mission of love and justice. Inspire us to know You better and open our hearts to hear Your call. Amen.

Commentary

1st Reading: Isaiah 22:19-23

Eliakim was divinely called and appointed. He was gifted the key of the House of David. Not literally a key, John refers to the same "key" in Revelation 3:7, "The holy one, the true, who holds the key of David, who opens and no one shall close, who closes and no one shall open." This powerful key signifies the stewardship of God's kingdom on Earth.

Stewardship involves supervising and managing a superior's goods, finances, or affairs. A good steward is chosen for his honesty, integrity, and work ethic. Throughout history, God chose many stewards to His kingdom. His selections were often surprising because of traits like youth (the prophet Jeremiah), gender (the judge Deborah), occupation (the poor shepherd King David), or inept speech (Moses, whose brother Aaron was his spokesman).

When Jesus began His public ministry, the main duty of the steward shifted from heralding the future Messiah to a missionary task of spreading His word throughout the world. Jesus personally selected this first group of New Testament stewards from an unlikely group of uneducated laborers. He "summoned those whom He wanted and they came to Him. He appointed twelve [whom He also named apostles]" (Mk 3:13-14). Today, our bishops follow directly from these men in the line of apostolic succession.

Question

Have you heard God's call in your life? To what vocation or ministry do you think He calls you?

Commentary

2nd Reading: Romans 11:33-36

St. Paul reminds us that God is generous, wise, just, all-knowing, and all-around perfect. Who are we to question His ways? We can imagine sitting on the edge of His ocean of love and goodness, gazing in awe at its limitless depths. What else can we do but offer praise and gratitude? This is exactly what God desires from us.

Apostolic Stewardship

How can we offer praise and gratitude in a way that seems worthy of the blessings God has poured out on us? Put His gifts to good use! God blesses each of His children with unique gifts and talents to help us excel in the path He has laid out for us. We are called to be stewards of these gifts, putting them to good use to further the glory of our generous God.

In order to ensure that these gifts bear fruit, they must be nourished, pruned, and tended regularly. Our gifts are nourished by receiving the Sacraments, which build us up by helping strengthen and express our faith in God. Our gifts can be pruned by constantly striving to learn and seek the wisdom of the Holy Spirit to find ways to perfect these talents. Tending to our gifts requires putting them to use consistently as well as working to extend the reach of their fruits.

When we offer our own gifts and talents as praise, through God's grace, they take on a life and meaning beyond our own understanding in the conversions that they generate in others' lives.

Question

What are some of the gifts that God has blessed you with? How have you put those gifts to use? Have you helped others recognize their talents?

This is the third of a four-week series on the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. Christ in Our Neighborhood is an evangelization program of the Diocese of Phoenix.

Commentary

Gospel: Matthew 16:13-20

Jesus sent the apostles to share the Good News throughout the world: God has conquered death and sin. They received the Holy Spirit and went out to preach the resurrection. This duty is still fulfilled daily by the Pope, bishops, priests, and lay ministers of the Church. Although the message has not changed since the time of Christ, the Church herself is a living being, constantly renewing and growing. It requires constant effort to uphold the teachings of Christ while integrating with the changes in the world. The Church “is upheld infallibly in the truth: Christ governs her through Peter and the other apostles, who are present in their successors, the Pope and the college of bishops.” (CCC 870)

The Church leaders, called the Magisterium, consist of Peter’s successor, the Pope, in union with the bishops, the apostles’ successors. The Magisterium has the authority and responsibility to establish guidelines and release proclamations in persona Christi in order to preserve the teachings of the faith. Each of these men has been called and appointed by the Church to teach Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

The teachings of the Church are not optional, and cannot be followed in fragments, because they offer the fullness of Christ’s teachings. These teachings, as a whole, offer help and safety, not undue restriction. Consider the analogy of driving on a steep, narrow road. The danger of sliding off the edge would cause you to proceed slowly and cautiously. The presence of a guardrail inspires confidence to drive faster, though still with caution. The teachings of the Church offer a guardrail of sorts for our spiritual journey, still allowing us to drive, but keeping us from sliding off of the road.

Question

Do you know and fully follow all Church teachings? Are there any that you struggle with?

This Week’s Task

Offer a rosary for the health and intentions of the Pope and for the health and intentions of the bishop(s) in your diocese.

Group Prayer

The group prays the following prayer for the Pope, all bishops, all priests, all ordained religious:

O God, who hast appointed Thine only-begotten Son to be the eternal High Priest for the glory of Thy Majesty and the salvation of mankind; grant that they whom He hath chosen to be His ministers and the stewards of His mysteries, may be found faithful in the fulfillment of the ministry which they have received. Through the same Christ Our Lord. Amen.

Continue with Psalm 138

Psalm

Response: Lord, your love is eternal; do not forsake the work of your hands.

I will give thanks to you, O LORD, with all my heart,
for you have heard the words of my mouth;
in the presence of the angels I will sing your praise;
I will worship at your holy temple.

R. Lord, your love is eternal; do not forsake the work of your hands.

I will give thanks to your name,
because of your kindness and your truth:
When I called, you answered me;
you built up strength within me.

R. Lord, your love is eternal; do not forsake the work of your hands.

The LORD is exalted, yet the lowly he sees,
and the proud he knows from afar.
Your kindness, O LORD, endures forever;
forsake not the work of your hands.

R. Lord, your love is eternal; do not forsake the work of your hands.

Conclude with an Our Father