

24th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Each year, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops designates the third Sunday in September as “Catechetical Sunday”. On this day we celebrate and pray for the church’s mission to continue to teach the gospel to all people. The theme for this year’s Catechetical Sunday is “Come to me all you who labor and are burdened” (Matthew 11:28). The theme focuses our attention on the important invitation that the Lord constantly offers us to follow him and the promise of his loving care to lighten our burdens and give rest to our souls.

On Catechetical Sunday, we recognize all those who teach the Catholic faith and share the church’s teachings with others. We thank our Catechists and all who volunteer their time to teach our children, teens and adults and invite them to a deeper bond with the Church. We bless them and commission them to continue their role in catechetical ministry.

We also reflect on the role that each one of us plays in living and teaching the beauty of our Catholic faith as well as inspire and lead others to Christ.

The readings for today’s liturgy talk about God’s infinite mercy and forgiveness for us. The readings call us to extend this virtue to others.

Many of us are used to financial debt. We receive statements to remind us to pay our debts. Yours and mine might be the mortgage, car payment or student loans that paid our education.

Imagine going to the mailbox and getting a note telling you that all your debts have been paid in full. I guess your first reaction would be, “Wow!” This is great news! It will be a great sigh of relief for you.

Think about this in the light of today’s gospel where a servant who owed a huge debt to a king was kindly and fully forgiven. The king showed compassion to his servant but this same servant failed to be gracious to his fellow servant. He went out and refused forgiveness to his fellow servant who owed him a much smaller amount. He failed to show compassion on another person who needed his love and care. The king heard of the bad behavior of the unforgiving servant. He summoned him to his presence and he punished him severely.

All of us have the attitude of the unforgiving servant in us. We receive forgiveness from God but fail to show this same gift to others. We need to overcome this human weakness and forgive one another just as God forgives our sins.

In the first reading, Ben Sirach urges us to eschew human vices because they are destructive.

He calls us to overcome grudges, anger, and revenge against those who offend or hurt us.

The responsorial psalm echoes the words of Ben Sirach by highlighting God’s infinite goodness for us. It reminds us that the Lord is kind and merciful; slow to anger, and rich in compassion.

St. Paul exhorts us in the second reading to live for Christ instead of ourselves. He tells us that none of us lives and dies for ourselves but for the Lord.

In the Eucharist Christ unites himself to us so we can remain with him. As we encounter him today in his word and the bread of life let us do so with gratitude for his forgiving love and become instruments and bearers of him to one another.

God bless.

Rev. Dr. Ben