

July 30, 2023
Cycle A – 17th Sunday in Ordinary Time

1 Kings 3:5, 7-12

Psalm 119:57, 72, 76-77, 127-128, 129-130

Romans 8: 28-30

Matthew 13:44-52

Notes from Bishop Peter

1. Let's begin with the short text from Paul's Letter to the Romans: "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified."
 - a. "All things work for the good for those who love God, who are called **according to his purpose** (or plan)." God loves us and has a plan for each of us and our families and our world. God is in charge. His plan works in and through us and even our world and one day will come to fruition. Meanwhile, God counts on those who love him to bring about his Kingdom on earth. More about that soon.
 - b. He foresaw that in those who believe in Jesus and love him, his very image would grow progressively as we let him take over in our lives. The beautiful text from II Corinthians, 2:17-18 makes this clear: "The Lord is the Spirit and wherever the Spirit is, there is freedom (from sin and guilt). And we, with unveiled faces, gazing on the face of the Lord Jesus, are being transformed little by little into the very image of the Lord, who is the Spirit."
 - Thus every time we gaze on Jesus in prayer or serve him in the members of our family or in the poor, his image becomes more and more beautiful in us until one day, when we face him after we die, we will see in ourselves what Jesus sees.
 - Jesus is on our side. He wants us to get there and will always be with us to help us live **his** life of loving and faithful service. How good is the Lord!
2. What does Jesus want from us? To be his collaborators in bringing the Kingdom of God into this world.

- a. What does “Kingdom of God” mean? We can simply go to the words of the Our Father: “Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.” Imagine that we are swept up to heaven where the Kingdom is fully realized. God is at the center and all the blessed love God and one another. There are no divisions of any kind. There is no poverty or physical or mental suffering, no jealousy or envy, no selfishness and no fear of oppression or bullying.
 - b. That’s exactly what Jesus wants, that we struggle to bring the ideals of the Kingdom into our own hearts and into society. He likens our struggle to that of people who sell all they have to buy the pearl of great price or the treasure hidden in a field. He wants us to give 100% as he did.
 - c. This involves fighting against the inclinations toward evil within us such as abuse of power, seeking prestige or piling up possessions.
 - d. It entails changing structures so that people can become more fully alive. Examples: The 19th amendment to the Constitution that recognized (not gave) women’s right to vote and Title IX that mandated, among other things, equal access for women and girls to sports. Speaking negatively, the following block the breaking in of the Kingdom: the oppression of human beings who are Black, Hispanic, Asian or Native Americans, setting standards that made it difficult or impossible for Black people to exercise their right to vote, belittling gay, lesbian or transgender persons or any persons for that matter, abortion, euthanasia and, among others, the continual development and deployment of nuclear weapons.
3. Finally, in the Gospel parable, Jesus speaks about the workers who separate the good fish from the inedible. Thus it will be until the end of time. Good will exist alongside evil but ultimately God will see to it that good overcomes evil, truth, falsehood and light, darkness. Until then we must work hard, knowing that Jesus is with us and that very fact should bring us joy even though our efforts may **seem** fruitless. With God, all our labors for good (and you have made many and continue to do so) will produce positive results in God’s own time and God’s own way.

Amen.