Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church

September 5, 2010

Twenty-Third Sunday of Ordinary Time

Readings:
Wisdom 9:13-18
Philemon 9-10, 12-17
Luke 14:25-33
Fr Bob

It's not difficult to understand the words of our first reading from the Book of Wisdom, "who can know God's counsel, or who can conceive what the Lord intends.' And the words go on to point out that how can we, who are bound to the earth, possibly know what God intends. It's also not difficult to come to a conclusion about our Gospel reading, That perhaps it's one of the harshest passages that we have and asks something almost impossible: To hate, or to discard all the things of earth, To, as the Gospel puts it, to 'hate' the very people we love. The word hate is the best translation from an original language that we have, but its original meaning is pretty close: preferring, or loving God above all things. The world is tangible and we can see it and touch it, and it becomes our reality, while the reality of God is often elusive. The first reading states the way we are. And the Gospel presents what seems like an almost impossible challenge. But there is something in our readings that is important for us to understand. And it's not so much a God who demands too much, although he is truly demanding. And it's not about a God who wants us to cast everything aside. For our friends and our families, our loved ones are blessings from him. But the passage from Wisdom has an interesting line. And it's worth contemplating, when we try to seek the things of heaven and to bring them down to our earth. The line says, "And what is within our grasp we find with difficulty."

Or in other words, what is right in front of us, is something that we often miss. What is right in front of us, within our reach, is something that we have trouble grasping. And in this case, it's touching God, in the midst of confusion and often chaos, through the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus, as I say many times, has ways of turning things around to make more sense of things and I believe that he's doing that in the Gospel. And again, with translation problems, he is not calling us to hate the blessings that he's given us. But he is showing us a way…his way…of learning how to treasure them even more. He raises a question for us to contemplate. What would our lives be like, if we worked as hard at being his disciples, as we work at other things. What if we motivated ourselves to truly discovering him and loving him as much as we love other things in this world. What would happen to us, if we spent a huge effort, grasping the God who tells us that he is within our reach and can be just as tangible as anything else. If we put out that kind of effort to learn about his ways, then we can bring the things of earth and heaven together.

And in that, instead of hating, we would find the source that would show us instead how to love father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, and even our own life, with more fervor and with more peace than we could imagine. He also mentions the crosses that we carry, because we do suffer in different ways in this world. But touching the God that is within our grasp would show us that we are not alone, And that he is there to help us through all things. Will we ever understand all things about God? Probably not. Will we always be able to grasp what is within our reach? Again, probably not. But the desire to be a disciple, the desire to do what is right, the initiative of seeking God in a single hearted way, and occasionally touching his presence, the willingness to work at knowing God as hard as we work at other things, is enough to bring that divine love to our very human world.