

## **Homily For Tuesday of the 32nd Week of Ordinary Time - Year 1 St Peter's 8:30 am/7:00 pm Masses - November 14, 2023**

**Wisdom 2:23-3.9** "Those who trust in him will understand truth ."

**Psalms 34:2,3,16-19** "The Lord is near to the broken hearted, and saves the crushed in spirit."

**Luke 17:7-10** "When you have done all ... say "We have done only what we ought to have done."

### **What We Should Do**

#### **Introduction**

Civil court cases are very different from prosecutions for offenses against the law. In civil cases, there is someone who has suffered a loss of some kind. It could be financial or it could be physical injury. There is a principle in civil law that, in determining whether there should be payment for a loss that someone suffers. That principle is based on the question: Did the accused party do everything they could reasonably have done to avoid the risk of harming someone. It used to be called the 'reasonable man' defense. If a tree falls on a car or a person, did the person or municipality who owned the land the tree was on know that the tree was in danger of falling. Should they have known and done something about it?

#### **Luke**

Some of the parables of Jesus present someone who is doing something quite unreasonable. This would be obvious. Any of us might cry out against the unreasonableness of a son who demands his inheritance while his father is still alive, then even more when the father, quite unreasonably, takes him back.

This time, Jesus tells a parable that appeals to what would be understood as total common sense. Any reasonable person would see his logic. No master would have his servants eat first. Not because he is mean, but because that's just how it works. Even more important in this parable, no servant would think it reasonable to eat before his master, his boss. A really good boss might invite the servants to sit down with him as soon as they have finished preparing and serving, but that's as far as that would go.

Even today, with all of our talk of equality, and often it is just talk, when you go to a restaurant, you get seated by a host, then someone comes by and says: "Hello, my name is Vanessa, or my name is Robert, and I will be your server this evening." I think I have the script pretty close to 100%. I'm not even Vanessa's or Robert's boss. I'm just a customer and he or she is, at least temporarily, my servant. But I will bet that no one has ever seen the server sit down and eat with you, or tell you that, now that they have taken your order, they are going to sit down and eat before bringing your meal. It would be ridiculous. It would be contrary to what it means to be a servant, contrary to reason itself.

A few days prior to their successful Mt Everest summit attempt, Tenzing had saved Hillary's life when a chunk of ice gave way after he tried to jump across a crevasse. Tenzing tightened the rope that bound them and held on, enabling Hillary to climb out of the sheer walled ice chasm. When asked whether he thanked his friend and servant who saved him, Hillary said simply, "Tenzing and I were a team. I expected him to carry out the right procedures in an emergency, just as I would. Thank him? I'd have been damn mad if he hadn't saved me."

Today, Jesus invites his disciples to consider the attitude of the servant. That servant should fulfill his duties without expecting any reward: "Is he grateful to that servant because he did what was commanded?" Later on, Jesus will tell His disciples: "I no longer call you slaves, because a slave does not know what his master is doing. I have called you friends, because I have told you everything I have heard from my Father." If servants are to fulfill their duties, we his disciples, whom he calls his friends, must even more so do what God has given us to do.

## **Wisdom**

During November, our duty is pray for the dead. Chapter 2 from the Book of Wisdom is often used at funerals because it offers a great consolation. Death entered the world because of sin. It was not God's plan A. That's why it feels so wrong, so unreasonably disruptive of what should be. God's solution is the death of the Son. He goes through that disruptive thing, comes out the other side, then offers that life to us. As always, there are two paths, two ways to approach this

gift of God. One is to embrace the devil, who caused the entry of death into the world. The result of that is "to be in the possession of the devil."

But the second way is for the just, those who acknowledge God and do what is right. They are at peace because they are in the hands of God. Chastised a little by the experience of death, they are found worthy of himself. What a great consolation. It is very important for us to pray for our loved ones who have gone to the grave, so that they will shine with light and come to full understanding of the truth of God. Our prayers can speed them along because our love inspires love in them.

### **Call to Conversion**

And so you and I come again to the same question. What ought I to do today? What is it that I, a servant and friend of God, do if I am to be just, to do what is right, not asking for thanks, but giving thanks that the Lord of the universe has asked me to serve him. Here are three responses we might consider for ourselves.

From St. Ambrose: "Don't make much of it if you have done your duties well since you have done what you ought to do. The sun fulfils its role, the moon obeys, the angels carry out their duties."

From Pope Benedict: "If we do God's will today with humility, without claiming anything from him, it will be Jesus himself who serves us, who helps us, who encourages us, who gives us strength and serenity." (Benedict XVI)

From the Catechism: "The more one does what is good, the freer one becomes. There is no true freedom except in the service of what is good and just. The choice to disobey and do evil is an abuse of freedom and leads to "the slavery of sin." (CCC #1733)

Today, let us do what we ought to do, what we have been given to. Let us live in the freedom of the servants of God, his beloved sons and daughters, the brothers and sisters of the one who became our servant.

## **Key Passages**

**Entrance Antiphon:** *All peoples, clap your hands. Cry to God with shouts of joy!*

**Collect:** *O God, who through the grace of adoption chose us to be children of light, grant that we may not be wrapped in the darkness of error but always be seen to stand in the bright light of truth.*

**Wisdom:** *God created us for incorruption, and made us in the image of his own eternity. But, through the devil's envy, death entered the world, and those who belong to his company experience it. But the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and no torment will ever touch them. In the eyes of the foolish, they seemed to have died, and their departure was thought to be a disaster, and their going from us to be their destruction. But they are at peace. For though in the sight of others they were punished, their hope is full of immortality. Having been disciplined a little, they will receive great good, because God tested them and found them worthy of himself. Like gold tested in fire, he tried them and, like a sacrificial burnt offering, he accepted them. In the time of their visitation they will shine forth. They will govern nations, and the Lord will reign over them forever. Those who trust in him will understand truth, and the faithful will abide with him in love, because grace and mercy are upon his holy ones, and he watches over his elect.*

**Psalm:** *My soul makes its boast in the Lord. Let the humble hear and be glad. O magnify the Lord with me and let us exalt his name together. The Lord is near to the broken hearted, and saves the crushed in spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord rescues them from them all.*

**Luke:** *Jesus said to the disciples: "Who among you would say to your slave who has just come in from ploughing or tending sheep in the field, 'Come here at once and take your place at the table'? Would you not rather say to him, 'Serve me while I eat and drink. Later you may eat and drink'? Do you thank the slave for doing what was commanded? So you also, when you have done all that you were ordered to do say, 'We are worthless slaves. We have done only what we ought to have done.'"*