ELEVENTH SUNDAY ORDINARY TIME “C”

STEWARDSHIP: Like Nathan in today’s first reading, we sin when we begin to feel entitled and act as if what we have is ours by right, when we forget that everything we have is an unmerited gift from God. But God is gracious and forgiving — even when we use His gifts wrongly or squander them thoughtlessly — if, like Nathan, we confess our guilt and ask His pardon.

Horace Bushnell
“Forgiveness is man’s deepest need and highest achievement.

READINGS TWELFTH SUNDAY 19 JUN ‘16
Zec. 12:10-11; 13:1: The prophet Zechariah looks forward to a time of national renewal and change when God will pour out on His people a spirit of compassion and supplication. The life and ministry of Christ are foretold by Zechariah, including His execution.
Gal. 3:26-29: Today’s reading from Galatians contains one of the great Christian statements of our equality through Baptism: there is no longer Jew and Greek, slave or free person, male or female — all that matters is that we are one in Christ.
Lk. 9:18-24: Jesus asks His disciples who they think He is and He then proceeds to confirm His divinity and warns that He and His followers will be persecuted before being glorified by God.

Sydney Smith
“Never try to reason the prejudice out of a man. It was not reasoned into him and cannot be reasoned out.”

SAINT OF THE WEEK: ANTHONY of PADUA 1195-1231 13 JUN

Born Ferdinand Martin de Bulhoes in Lisbon, Portugal, Anthony was the son of a knight in King Alphonso’s court. He began his studies at the cathedral in Lisbon and joined the Augustinians when he was fifteen. Ordained in about 1219, he transferred to the Franciscans in 1221, at which time he took the name Anthony.

Anthony was sent to Morocco to preach to the Moors, but was soon forced to return because of illness. He was stationed at a small hermitage in Italy, where he spent his time studying Scripture, praying, and doing menial tasks. Once, at an ordination when no one was prepared to speak, Anthony hesitantly accepted the task. His fellow Franciscans, expecting little from him, were astounded by his sermon, and Anthony began a new ministry as a preacher.

Anthony was assigned to preach throughout Italy. Noted for his eloquence, fire, and persuasiveness, he attracted large crowds wherever he spoke, and was particularly successful at converting heretics. Recognized as a great scholar, Anthony became the first Franciscan friar to teach theology to other Franciscan friars.

Appointed minister provincial of the Franciscan order, Anthony was released from these duties in 1226 in order to resume his preaching.
Anthony settled in Padua, reformed the city, abolished the debtors’ prison, and aided the poor. In 1231, he suffered from exhaustion and dropsy, and recovered briefly in Camposanpiero. On his return to Padua, he collapsed and died at a Poor Clare convent at Arcella, on June 13, 1231 at the age of thirty-six.

Anthony was called the “Wonder Worker” for his many reported miracles. He preached to crowds in the rain, but his audiences remained dry despite the downpour. He was hailed as a thaumaturgist after healing a man’s severed leg and restoring life to a man so that he could testify in a murder case. The Christ Child also appeared to Anthony in a halo.

Anthony was canonized in the year following his death and was declared at Doctor of the Church by Pope Pius XII in 1946. He is the patron of the poor and oppressed as well as the patron Lisbon, Split, Paderborn, Hildersheim, children, travelers, married couples, women, animas and miners. He is invoked against infertility, demons, fevers, wars, shipwrecks, and plagues. Anthony is also widely invoked for the return of lost articles. This belief comes from a story which told of a Franciscan novice who ran away, taking with him a book of Psalms which Anthony had been using. Anthony prayed for the return of the book and the novice, struck by an alarmong vision, brought the psalter back to Anthony.

CHRISTIAN SYMBOLISM  Continued

Christianity is a religion based on incarnation. Christ, who is at once both God and man, is the mediator for our salvation. He took the form of man to allow us to enter into the life of God. This key to Christian symbolism is epitomized by the sacraments, a combination of spoken words and visible signs, which appeal to all five sense. Apart from the words which we hear and the gestures which we see, liturgy also makes us smell incense, taste the bread and the wine which have become the body and blood of Christ (as such the Eucharist is much more than just a symbol, it is the constantly renewed remembrance of Christ’s sacrifice). It appeals to the sense of touch through the laying-on of hands and the use of oil for anointing, by attending to the sick, caring for the poor and maintaining contact with the dying. God reveals Himself and gives Himself to us at the most critical moments of our lives, and His religion remains profoundly human.

Symbols unite and bring us together even though Christians do not live in that perfect unity which, before the Passion, Christ asked of God for His disciples. Despite numerous disagreements and ruptures, the Church managed to maintain this unity for a thousand years, for the Great Schism with the East occurred only in 1054. Then, five hundred years later, in the sixteenth century, Luther’s Reformation separated the Christians of the West and led to the wars of religion.

The years since the conclusion of the Second Vatican Council have given witness to an increasing number of ecumenical initiatives and attempts at reconciliation. Pope John Paul II wrote at the beginning of his Encyclical *Ut unam sint* (“May they be one”) 25 May 1995: “The call for Christian unity, made by the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council with such impassioned commitment, is finding an every greater echo in the hearts of believers, especially at the Year 2000 approaches, a year which Christians will celebrate as a sacred Jubilee, the commemoration of the Incarnation of the Son of God, who became man in order to save humanity.” These initiative have continued whether we are speaking of the more formal
meetings between leaders of the various churches or the more “grass root” activities conducted by various parishes rooted in recognizable commonly held truths. Roman liturgy is marked by a certain discretion, both in its texts – biblical for the most part – and in its gestures or vestments. But this leads to a powerful expression of the sacred, which is the presence and action of God. In the West, the Anglican and Lutheran liturgies are fairly close to Roman liturgy, while the Reformed Church, more strongly linked to Calvin, is far simpler focusing entirely on the Word of God. To be continued.

**JUNE DEDICATED TO THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS**

Growing up Catholic in the 50’s and 60’s was a rich experience. In a typical Catholic home like ours you would find a variety of religious imagery, statues, crucifixes, religious pictures, fonts of holy water, holy cards bearing images of Jesus and the saints – in one form or another they were part of the background of the typical Catholic home, the homes of my class mates and neighbors. These various religious objects of my boyhood – and you still may find them in many Catholic homes today – were powerful reminders of the presence of God. They “lift up our minds and hearts to God,” as our catechism taught us. Even, and perhaps especially, in troubled times, they taught us that God’s love was ever near. There was something else that our religious objects did for us. They helped us to recall our heroes. When we were tempted to forget our goals and ideals they helped us to remember.

For Catholics, the symbol of the Sacred Heart of Jesus is a powerful image of the love of God. Throughout the Hebrew Bible, the heart of God was a key image of the God who kept covenant with His people. The heart itself was the very center – the core – of a person. Time and time again the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob begged His people not to harden their hearts but to return to Him. In the Gospels, when Jesus was challenged to summarize the law of God, He stressed loving God with all our heart and our neighbor as ourselves. The New Testament stressed love as the way to life, “God is Love,” wrote St. John; “and whoever abides in love abides in God and God in them” (1 Jn. 4:16). To St. Paul, the presence of love renders all other gifts worthwhile, while its absence renders them useless (1 Cor. 3).

The Sacred Heart of Jesus, is meant to symbolize the love of God and to evoke love for God from us. What is so striking about the image is that the Heart of Christ is depicted as both crowned with thorns and on fire with love. Ringed by a crown of thorns, Jesus’ heart is the heart of the one who was crucified. On the cross, Jesus was given a crown of thorns by His tormentors. This was a gesture of mockery. His enemies believed that Jesus was attempting to establish a kingdom on earth. The crown of thorns was meant to highlight the apparent failure of Jesus to do so successfully. Instead of a majestic crown of gold studded with diamonds, this terrible crown made of dead wood was an image of barrenness, futility and failure. Besides its meaning as an instrument of mockery, the crown of thorns was an actual instrument of torture. It was positioned so that its points pressed into the skull, causing bleeding and excruciating pain. The cutting remarks of those who tormented Jesus were reinforced by the thorns cutting into His head.

Yet in the image of the Sacred Heart there is a blessed irony. Though crowned with thorns, the heart of Jesus is aflame with love. In the Gospel of John (1:5), the light of God is described as “a light no darkness can extinguish.” This is the meaning here. The divine love burns on behind,
despite and within the crown of thorns. To Christians, the image is a potent reminder of the omni-potent power of divine love.

"THE MASS IS NOT ABOUT GOD 'REACHING DOWN' TO EARTH AS MUCH AS IT IS ABOUT US BEING SWEPT UP INTO HEAVEN."

~Mark Hart~