

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON (or a hymn) See, I have God for my help. The Lord sustains my soul. I will sacrifice to you with willing heart, and praise your name, O Lord, for it is good.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM (Ps 85)

ANTIPHON: Lord, you are good and forgiving.

RESPONSE: Lord, you are good and forgiving.

LECTOR: O Lord, you are good and forgiving, full of love to all who call. Give heed, O Lord, to my prayer and attend to the sound of my voice. **R.**

LECTOR: All the nations shall come to adore you and glorify your name, O Lord: for you are great and do marvellous deeds, you who alone are God. **R.**

LECTOR: But you, God of mercy and compassion, slow to anger, O Lord, abounding in love and truth, turn and take pity on me. **R.**

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION Alleluia, alleluia! Blessed are you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth; you have revealed to little ones the mysteries of the kingdom. Alleluia.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON (or a hymn) The Lord, the gracious, the merciful, has made a memorial of his wonders; he gives food to those who fear him.

Or

Behold, I stand at the door and knock, says the Lord. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door to me, I will enter his house and dine with him, and he with me.

TODAY'S READINGS Wisdom 12:13, 16-19; Romans 8:26-27; Matthew 13:24-43

NEXT WEEK (17th Sunday of Year A) 1 Kgs 3:5, 7-12; Ps 118; Rom 8:28-30; Mt 13:44-52

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Justice and mercy



19 July 2020 16th Sunday Year A

In our human way of seeing things, we are inclined to see justice and mercy as opposed values. At the very least, we give priority to legal rights and human justice as the very basis for a workable society. We think qualities like empathy, compassion, forgiveness and mercy might have a secondary place, but justice is surely the abiding social principle.

Even the Church presents us with principles of "social justice" rather than speaking of "social mercy"!

Today's readings present us with the image of a God in whom justice and mercy meet. Furthermore, the writer of Wisdom suggests to us that divine mercy is at the very heart of divine justice: "You are mild in judgment and govern us with great leniency ... and yet you never judge unjustly". God, it seems, cannot act justly towards us without also acting mercifully – with tenderness, love and forgiveness.

Elsewhere in the Scriptures (2 Samuel), the problem with 'merciless justice' is evident in the account of King David. When confronted with the story of a rich man stealing a poor man's sheep, David was outraged to the point of saying "he must die!". To this, the prophet Nathan replies: "You are the man!". Nathan reminds David of his sins, including murder and adultery. Now David's commitment to 'cold and unfeeling

justice' for others is replaced by his cry for forgiveness and mercy for himself. David repents, knowing his need for God's 'merciful justice'.

Mercy is also highlighted in the life and preaching of Jesus shown in the parable of the sower who was blighted with darnel or weeds being sown among the wheat. What is he to do? If he pulls out the weedy darnel, he will also lose a lot of good wheat. He decides to allow the wheat and weeds to grow together and then, at harvest time, it will be easier to separate the two.

The parable suggests that God knows the reality of the human heart: each of us is a mixture of good and evil. No matter how much we may demand justice for the world, like David, we are all capable of being blind to our own unjust treatment of others. Jesus is asking us to look at ourselves to realise we are all a "mixed crop"; and to recognise the coming reign of God does not depend on human powers but on divine grace and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

In the words of St John Paul II – so often repeated by Pope Francis – "the mercy of God is the mission of the Church". Yes, this includes our commitment to justice, but it does so with the tender-hearted love of parents for their children. God's justice is ever merciful.