



WEEKLY GOSPEL REFLECTION



24th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle C

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'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.' Luke 15:5

In this week's gospel, Jesus is confronted by the scribes and Pharisees that grumbled at His dining with "tax collectors and sinners." In this context the scribes and Pharisees are the social equivalent of what Jesus sees as the merely "righteous." See Matthew 5:20: "For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven." Tax collectors and sinners are the Mosaic Law "outlaws" in the eyes of those "righteous."

While the "righteous" judge harshly through physical eyes, it's highly doubtful that Jesus welcomed and ate with mortal sinners. He saw souls longing for conversion. See Luke 19:1-10 and the encounter with Zacchaeus, a chief tax collector: "Zacchaeus come down out of that sycamore-fig tree immediately. I must stay at your house today ...for today salvation has come to this house." He was sent to transform a mere house into a "House for Many – an 'eccu mani' universal house." It is in this setting that Jesus can accomplish his core mission to reconcile the world to Himself: "here is my hand. I offer it in peace." His desire is to build a bridge to bring these two groups together united as one. (Note: the word ecumenical is derived from the Corsican "eccu mani" – "here is my hand.")

Jesus then tells in the parables of the Lost Sheep and Lost Coin His passionate desire to bring wholeness to a Community that has lost one of His own. In the telling of the parable of the "Lost Sheep" the number 99 is a discordant number, as is the number 9 in the parable of the "Lost Coin." Both represent destabilization from that which is incomplete, lacking in wholeness and holiness. The Shepherd, then, is driven to go after the "lost sheep," as is the woman that sweeps the house until she finds the "lost coin." That which destabilized the wholeness is restored to harmony in balance and holiness.

"...there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance... there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents." Jesus does not condone sinful behavior instead he seeks the lost and desires a reunion in a joyous celebration of restoration and unity.

This week, reflect on our mission to seek out the lost, with a desire to bring a wholeness and holiness to our universal "House for Many." Receiving into ourselves that which makes us complete, there is a joyous outflow of grace, a "tsunami of grace" flowing outward from the merciful and loving Sacred Heart of Jesus. We then sing joyfully as the angels sang,

"Glory to God in the highest and peace to his people on earth!"

A reading from the holy gospel according to Luke

All the tax collectors and sinners
were coming near to listen to Jesus.
And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying,
"This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them."

So Jesus told them a parable:

*"Which one of you,
having a hundred sheep and losing one of them,
does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness
and go after the one that is lost until he finds it?
When he has found it,
he lays it on his shoulders and rejoices.
And when he comes home,
he calls together his friends and neighbours, saying to them,
'Rejoice with me,
for I have found my sheep that was lost.'"*

Just so, I tell you,
there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents
than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.

*"Or what woman having ten silver coins,
if she loses one of them,
does not light a lamp, sweep the house,
and search carefully until she finds it?
When she has found it,
she calls together her friends and neighbours, saying,
'Rejoice with me,
for I have found the coin that I had lost.'"*

Just so, I tell you,
there is joy in the presence of the angels of God
over one sinner who repents.

The Gospel of the Lord