

For Sunday, October 22, 2017

To Whom Do We Belong?

29th Sunday of Ordinary Time

<http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/102217.cfm>

Isaiah 45:1, 4-6

1 Thessalonians 1:1-5B

Matthew 22:15-21

Something somewhat unique about my family is that we have three boys pretty close in age. This means we have a lot of fun, a lot of energy, a lot of messes, and a lot of fighting each and every day. It's a joy to watch them grow in community with each other, and in a lot of ways the littleness of their actions is a school of love for me as I tend to them.

One thing that really fascinates me is how particular they are about their possessions.

Growing up with four siblings of my own, I totally empathize and remember going through this phase. But being an adult spectator is something brand new to me.

There have been many times when the boys receive the *exact* same gift from a family member, yet they can quickly identify the owner of each toy in a glance. The most recent objects of their affection are [Minions](#) placemats sent by my mom. Within seconds, each of the boys had their prized possession and no sooner than they put their hands on the mats they could easily tell me which was theirs (despite the fact they were all quite literally identical). This means if I try to give someone the wrong item or mix things up, there is always a heated quarrel as they take it upon themselves to find the proper owner of each item.

I'm reminded of these seemingly silly moments of childhood when I ponder on the readings this Sunday. We've heard time and again the story of giving what is due to Caesar to Caesar, and what is due to God to God. Most times it brings up a conversation or two on stewardship or causes us to ponder if we are giving enough to the church. But this week, my heart is pulled in another direction as I look at the readings together as a whole.

In the first reading, the prophet reveals one of the most beautiful characteristics of God: His jealous love for us. "*I am the Lord, there is no other.*" It's not that He wants to be the best or the most powerful among many gods. The truth we hear is that there is no competition or gray area. The only God we serve is the one true God. Our God is unfathomably in love with us and wants no competition. I think of my boys and how to them, they don't want just any toy, they want their own toy - the one that is rightfully theirs. They aren't okay with a substitute. In a much bigger way, God says to us that we are His through these readings. He is claiming us and wants to hear His children claim Him back.

In the Catechism we read that "God calls man first" ([CCC 2567](#)). The Responsorial Psalm this Sunday sings of our response to a God who is head over heels for humanity; we give Him praise and honor and glory. In the



second reading we see the response in action - our call to live as disciples like the Thessalonians, sharing the good news of our loving God with all those we meet.

Finally, in the Gospel we see the Pharisees try to put Jesus in a corner. The whole situation ends with the rebuke and call to give what is due to its rightful owner. We owe to God the love He has poured out to us by the witness of our lives as disciples of Christ.

This reality stirs in me. I see how particular and intense my boys can get over small earthly possessions. The truth of God's personal love for me as His child is far beyond anything I can imagine or compare. I sense the call to give to God what is His - glory, honor, blessing, a life lived in true discipleship as a child of God.

In our world today we so often give of ourselves until we are stretched thin. We give to the schools as volunteers, we give to the teams as coaches, we give to the organizations, and more. What if we shifted our focus a bit and made it a priority to give to God what is His prized possession? What if we gave God our hearts, on fire for Him and His word?

Let's make this week a chance to do just that - to see how beloved we each are personally to God, so much so that He wants no competitors - and give God what is rightfully His - a heart deeply in love with Him, ready to share the good news with everyone we meet.

Angie Windnagle

PRAYER

Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty,
my memory, my understanding,
and my entire will,
all I have and call my own.
You have given all to me.
To you, Lord, I return it.
Everything is yours; do with it what you will.
Give me only your love and your grace,
That is enough for me.
Amen.

— *Prayer of Surrender, St. Ignatius of Loyola*

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