Study Notes for the Sunday Mass

Published by Christians for Christ Ministries. Find us on the web at:
http://www.christiansforchrist.org

We are a non-denominational Christian ministry that seeks to encourage and facilitate Christians in studying the Holy Scriptures.

"For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus." 1 Timothy 2:5

Welcome back to the Sunday Mass notes. This week we open with an Old Testament reading from the prophecy of Isaiah, speaking about the future restoration of Israel. Then we move to Paul's first letter to the Corinthian church. In this portion he writes about the variety of spiritual gifts that God has given the people of the church. We conclude with a reading from the fourth Gospel, John, and the story of Jesus' first recorded miracle, turning water to wine. These passages should give the Christian great confidence in the blessed provision that God has made for those who trust and follow Him.

Introduction to the First Reading:

The prophet Isaiah lived and ministered for 40 years in the last half of the eighth century BC. In that day Israel was rampant with sin, and she pretty much ignored God's Word. Interspersed with the prophet's preaching against sin and declaring God's holiness and justice is an emphasis on the salvation God offers His people. In fact, the word salvation appears in Isaiah more than any other book of the Bible except the Psalms. Thus, he writes and speaks of the love of God and the salvation to come with Messiah. It is of special note, perhaps, that Isaiah's name means "the salvation of Jehovah." As you read the assigned passage, note the expression "the mouth of the LORD" which appears throughout the book but is unique to Isaiah.

First Reading:

> *Isaiah 62:1-5 NAS95 1 For Zion's sake I will not keep silent, And for Jerusalem's sake I will not keep quiet, Until her righteousness goes forth like brightness, And her salvation like a torch that is burning. 2 The nations will see your righteousness, And all kings your glory; And you will be called by a new name Which the mouth of the LORD will designate. 3 You will also be a crown of beauty in the hand of the LORD, And a royal diadem in the hand of your God. 4 It will no longer be said to you, "Forsaken," Nor to your land will it any longer be said, "Desolate"; But you will be called, "My delight is in her," And your land, "Married"; For the LORD delights in you, And to Him your land will be married. 5 For as a young man marries a virgin, So your sons will marry you; And as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, So your God will rejoice over you.*

The subject of chapter 62 of Isaiah is the restoration of Israel. In spite of her sinfulness and disobedience, God has a wonderful plan for His people, and Isaiah writes these words of encouragement. Zion is another name for Israel's capital, Jerusalem, the city of David. When she is restored, her righteousness and salvation will be a bright light ("a torch that is burning") so that all the nations of the world will recognize her as God's holy people. Israel will be seen as "a crown of beauty" and "a royal diadem" in God's hand.

Israel will have a new name; "Forsaken" and "Desolate" will be replaced by "My delight is in her" and "Married." It might put us in mind of the New Testament teaching regarding the Church as the Bride of Christ. Later in the chapter (verse 12), Israel is described as "The Holy People," "The Redeemed of the LORD," and "Sought Out." God's chosen people will have a universal reputation and other nations will seek her out, recognizing her unique relationship with God.

Verse 5 uses poetic imagery to illustrate that the inhabitants of Jerusalem will delight in their dwelling place. The picture, as one writer has said, "leaves an overwhelming impression of joy delight, righteousness, beauty, safety, and peace." Moreover, God is said to "rejoice over you," like a groom delights in his bride. God's wonderful plan of redemption not only delivers His people from sin and depravity but, more than that, restores them to a place of righteousness, exalting them above all other nations, and making them a blessing to the nations.

Introduction to the Second Reading:

Paul's first letter to the Corinthians deals with a number of problems, disagreements, and even divisions in the church body. Paul writes to answer questions, to correct misunderstandings, and to give clear instructions. Chapters 12-14 deal with spiritual gifts, a topic of great importance, because these gifts are given by God to His people for the express purpose of enabling them to do His work in building up the church and evangelizing a lost world. Chapter 12's emphasis is on the giving of the gifts and what they are essentially. Paul begins the chapter by pointing out that no one is a true Christian (one who says, "Jesus is Lord") unless the Holy Spirit has done His miraculous work of grace in bringing him to faith. Then the writer launches his significant teaching regarding spiritual gifts.

Second Reading:

> *1 Corinthians 12:4-11 NAS95 4 Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. 5 And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. 6 There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons. 7 But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. 8 For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit; 9 to another faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, 10 and to another the effecting of miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another the distinguishing of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues. 11 But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills.*

First, note that while Paul acknowledges the variety of God's endowments, he uses significantly different terms to describe them: "gifts," "ministries," effects." He also attributes the giving of these endowments to the Trinity: "the same Spirit," the same Lord," and "the same God." It is abundantly clear that whatever the gifts are and however they are to be used, they are the gifts of an almighty, all-knowing God who does all things right. We must understand how Paul, inspired by the Holy Spirit, uses these terms.

"Gifts" given by the Spirit, v. 4, suggests abilities, equipping, endowments, an actual skill or capability to do something. "Ministries" given by the Lord, v. 5, have to do with opportunities, appointments, assignments, the particular tasks that the gifted one is to pursue. "Effects" given by God, v. 6, represent the work, the results, or accomplishments. Several important conclusions should be noted right away. First, spiritual gifts are not self-created; they are given by God. Second, the place or task given the individual Christian is not of his own choosing; it is assigned in God's wisdom. Third, the results are because of God's working through the gifted believer; He is the one "who works all things in all persons."

One of the most important factors to understand regarding gifts is that they are not given primarily for the benefit of the gifted person. Paul makes it clear that they are given "for the common good," v. 8. The gifted Christian, then, has no basis for pride in his gift. It isn't for his own gain (although he undoubtedly does benefit when he obediently exercises his gift as God directs him); it is for the spiritual growth of the body of Christ, the church.

Paul lists a number of spiritual gifts in this passage, but the list is neither restricted nor exhaustive. There are other passages that mention gifts (e.g. Romans 12:6-8 and 1 Peter 4:10-11), and it is likely that the sum of them all is only representative of the enabling, opportunities, and results that God alone can give. It is important to remember that it is all of God, both to the distribution of the gifts and their results. It is the "one and the same Spirit [who] works all these things."

Introduction to the Gospel Reading:

John's Gospel is different from the other three, often called "the synoptic Gospels," meaning that they are written from a similar viewpoint. John's is unique; for example, he doesn't include anything about the birth, baptism, temptation, transfiguration, or the ascension of Jesus. He includes only ten miracles (while the others have 18-20) and one parable (the others have from 5-20). But there are many important issues that only John includes. His purpose is expressed in chapter 20, verse 31: *These have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.*

Gospel Reading:

> *John 2:1-11 NAS95 1 On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there; 2 and both Jesus and His disciples were invited to the wedding. 3 When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus *said to Him, "They have no wine." 4 And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what does that have to do with us? My hour has not yet come." 5 His mother said to the servants, "Whatever He says to you, do it." 6 Now there were six stone waterpots set there for the Jewish custom of purification, containing twenty or thirty gallons each. 7 Jesus said to them, "Fill the waterpots with water." So they filled them up to the brim. 8 And He said to them, "Draw some out now and take it to the headwaiter." So they took it to him. 9 When the headwaiter tasted the water which had become wine, and did not know where it came from (but the servants who had drawn the water knew), the headwaiter called the bridegroom, 10 and said to him, "Every man serves the good wine first, and when the people have drunk freely, then he serves the poorer wine; but you have kept the good wine until now." 11 This beginning of His signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in Him.*

We don't know who the bride and groom were at this wedding, but John tells us about some of the noted guests: Jesus, His disciples, and most notably, "the mother of Jesus." The story is familiar to most Bible readers: they ran out of wine at the wedding reception. Mary reports the need to Jesus as if to ask Him to do something about it. What was she really asking of Him? After all, she knew who He really was and had pondered the events of His life (Luke 2:38, 51). She had seen His remarkable demonstration in the Jerusalem Temple with the scholars (Luke 2:51). She no doubt longed to be relieved of the stigma attached to His birth (cf. John 8:41). And she probably thought that this occasion would be an ideal opportunity for Him to declare His origin and identity. Jesus' answer sounds rather harsh to us, but what he said to her probably was intended to inform her that what He would do would not achieve what she had in mind. It wasn't yet time for a full disclosure of His purposes.

Nonetheless, Jesus did perform the first of His public miracles, and the headwaiter was amazed at the better quality of this new wine compared to what had been served earlier. When Jesus exercises His power, it always produces the very best results! Verse 11 indicates that this miracle clearly demonstrated His glory and, as a result, His disciples "believed Him." The wonders that Jesus performed from this point on confirmed to His followers that He was more than a mere mortal. He was God in the flesh, as John clearly taught in chapter 1. The writer makes a most significant statement when he identifies this miracle as the "beginning of His signs." John includes seven signs in his Gospel, which are performed as verification of His identity as Messiah, the promised anointed one.

Reflection Questions

1. List two ways in which you are anticipating with joyful expectation the fulfillment of God's promise to restore His people?

2. List two or three of the special gifts God has given you. In what ways are you using it to serve God's church?

3. Discuss your understanding of how Jesus is the living "Word of God." How is a living person also the "word"?

{loadposition Scriptures-are-from-the-NASB-version}

Keywords: Second Sunday in Ordinary Time, Lectionary 66