



## **16<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME** **YEAR A – July 23, 2017**

The first reading today, from the book of Wisdom, was inspired by God and written down 100 years before Jesus was born. The purpose of God's revelation in that book was to enkindle in the Jewish people the faith that some of them had lost. It was a time of turmoil and persecution. Evil seemed to be winning the day. The book is a bridge between the Old and New Testament. Its wisdom for the past is appropriate for our time too.

Many of our young people today, are being told that science has now proven that we no longer need God. God did not create us, we created God. The new atheism is a modern kind of evil. It seems to be winning the day.

The book of wisdom reminds us (Chapter 12:16-19) that "God shows his might when the perfection of his power is disbelieved". He gives us "...ground for hope and permits repentance for our sins". But if there is no God, why ask God for forgiveness? "Grab all the gusto you can get", becomes the rule of the day. All rules are man-made. Pick the ones you like and disregard the others. Jesus came into our world to dispel that kind of darkness. Dare we call it the darkness of sin.

The responsorial psalm (Ps. 86) reminds us that the Lord is always willing to forgive, even when we move over to the dark side. He does not abandon us. God isn't finished with any of us; not yet. St. Paul in chapter 8 of his letter to the Romans reminds us that the Holy Spirit is the one who helps us come to our senses when we stray. He is like a GPS that says, "Recalculating", when we turn onto the wrong path. He even helps us pray when we are no longer able to pray because of the choices we make.

The problem of evil has been with us since the beginning of time. Philosophers and theologians have wrestled with it for thousands of years. It has been suggested by some that this dimension of human life here on earth is one of many unlimited dimensions of Purgatory. Purgatory is not a place but a state of being. One cannot argue from possibility to actuality but it is an interesting thought in the realm of "speculation". The doctrine of Purgatory was a later development in the Catholic Church. It was addressed at the Council of Florence (1439) and the Council of Trent in Session XXV (1545-1563). Praying for the dead that they may be loosed from their sins is a biblical concept that is found in the Old Testament (2 Maccabees 12:46) even though the word "purgatory" is not in the bible.

Jesus himself addresses the question of evil in today's Gospel. It should be noted that He is not speaking about unjust war. He is speaking about the kind of evil that affects the human soul even during a time of peace. Secular humanism and atheism are two modern day examples. Unjust war is a matter for another time.

Jesus compares the world of good and evil to a field where wheat and weeds are growing together. He reminds us that it is not our job to pull up the weeds, lest we destroy some of the wheat. That doesn't mean we don't speak out against evil. It does mean we don't play God. He asks us to leave the weeds alone until harvest time and He will take care of separating the good from the bad.

So what are WE to do with evil until "harvest time"?

Check out God's answer in (Romans 12:21).

