

3 Lent C – 2010
Divine Mercy Parish

“Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” Traditionally if asked, “Where is God?” One could say, “God is omnipresent; He is everywhere?” But God is present in a special way in heaven, in the Eucharist and in the souls of the just. One might continue, “Well, then where is heaven?” It is wherever God’s will is being done. Since God is our Creator as we strive to fulfill His will we grow in oneness with God and when that happens earth becomes heaven; however, when we begin to draw away from the divine will then it reverts back to being earth, the opposite of heaven. So if it is the fulfillment of God’s will that makes earth into heaven then what is God’s will? How do we know it? How do we do it? Well, it has been our belief from the beginning that the will of God is written into the hearts of His creatures; we call it conscience. That God has placed deep within us that which we need to know His will for us. We, if our conscience is healthy, know when something is not what God wants for us. It is this deep sense that I am about to choose something for or against the will of God. It is through the conscience that God can make His will known to us. The problem is that this conscience, this small voice of God, can be buried under accumulations of history, experience, sin. So in the fullness of time God spoke to us something new. He spoke to us from outside of time. We call this Divine Revelation. He gave us this knowledge to enlighten us about His will, and the first thing He gave us was the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai. These commandments express God’s will for us; they guide us in right relationships; they guide us to the truth of who we are meant to be, and they free us from the self-destructive behavior we can tend to because of sin. In other words, if you want happiness, and God desires that we have that, then the minimum we need to do are the Ten Commandments.

Murder, adultery, malicious gossip, theft are not behaviors that are going to bring one happiness. On the other hand if we do the will of the Father we can taste that beginning of heaven on earth. Since we come from God, doing His will can take us back to Him.

Jesus recognized this. At Jacob's Well he said, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent me, and to accomplish His work." The core of Jesus was to do the will of His Father. Remember on the Mount of Olives, "thy will be done." In what Jesus suffered in the Garden of Gethsemane we see the soul's struggle to become one with the Father's will. Going back to my first comments, then Jesus is heaven because it is in him and through him that the Father's will is fully done. For all of our good intentions we cannot do this on our own. The gravitational pull of our fallen will pulls us off course. It is Jesus who pulls us back. I guess in this petition we are praying to get close to Jesus – the heaven on earth so that God's grace can stop the downward pull of our selfishness and this grace makes us able to soar as we were created to do.

"Give us this day our daily bread." This fourth petition seems like the most human of them all because we all need "daily bread." We need to eat, and so we are allowed to pray that this need be filled. We are asked to put this concern into the hand of God. But bread is also a reminder that God is in control of all things. Bread may be the fruit of the earth and the "work of human hands" but it is only produced when cosmic powers outside of ourselves and our control are acting upon the wheat. The rain and the sunlight have to be present, and that is provided by God. This realization is an antidote for our pride because it helps us remember that not all things are under our control.

Also notice that once again the word "our" is used. Just as in the beginning it was "Our Father" now it is "our bread." Once again we are praying with and for others. We

are praying in communion with one another. We are praying that all, even the most poor and needy of our brothers and sisters have enough to eat. It also, in a subtle way, hints that anyone who has to pray for their bread day by day is poor. Poverty among the disciples was assumed by Jesus. There needs to be some within the church who have renounced the world and rely on God's providence alone. These trust solely in God to fill their needs – their “daily bread.” I think of people like Mother Theresa, and there have been other like her. She believed that if God wanted the work done He would provide the means. So, her congregation has never been endowed. They trust in divine providence. There are the Trappist monks of places like the Abbey of Getheminy in Kentucky who live austere lives of work and prayer and whose diet is often made up of milk or homemade beer, homemade cheese and good hearty bread – “daily bread.” By their example they encourage us to totally trust in God.

With this idea of “daily bread” there too is the idea of the exodus. The people were allowed to collect enough of this mysterious bread for only one day. Only on the sixth day could they collect enough for two days so that they could keep the Sabbath rest. But I think this “our daily bread” is also linked to the Eucharist. In John's gospel in chapter six it begins with the people's hunger and Jesus feeds them by the multiplication of the loaves and the fish, but after that he delivers the “bread of life discourse.” Here he teaches about the heavenly bread. He is talking about something that is more than biological – “man shall not live by bread alone but on every word that comes forth from the mouth of God.” The multiplication of the loaves and fish and the manna, these point beyond mere human bread to our real bread of life, our real nourishment – Jesus.

Yes, we all need bread. We need strength to be able to fulfill the nitty-gritty requirements of physical life. But we also need the bread of eternal life – the bread of angels. We need the strength that comes from Jesus our bread of life, who makes heaven on earth, for where he is God is, and where God is there too is heaven. “Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”