

Rev. Paul A. Hottinger

An Account for Our Lives Twenty-eighth Week in Ordinary Time Wednesday,
October 14, 2015 8:15 AM **Rom 2:1-11; Lk 11:42-46** (St. Callistus I, pope, martyr)
(God's mercy is always helping us to change. We have to be willing to give other people a
new start as well)

Today we are reading from St. Paul's Letter to the Romans, in this particular section:

“You, O man, are without excuse, every one of you who passes judgment.”

This is on the basic conviction throughout Scripture, Old and New Testament, that **everyone must render an account for his or her life.** Our lives really are not our possession. This is a great difference between biblical view and modern view. The modern view is our lives are ours: our bodies are ours, we can do with our bodies what we want, we can do with our lives as we want. This is not the biblical view. **The biblical view is that we are stewards of our lives and stewards of our bodies, but not owners.** God is the owner. If you want, you could say our lives and our bodies are on loan. That's one way of thinking about it. And as in the ancient world the master would from time to time demand an account of a steward: How are things going? How much do you owe? What problems do you have? This in an accounting a steward might give to the master of an estate, for example, or a vineyard. So **we have to give an account for our lives,** how things are going, because **we are actually in charge, even though they are not ours.** That's the basic idea.

Jesus follows that also, that basic idea, but his particular focus in this gospel reading is that **people ought to focus on what is substantial rather than what is surface.** And he is criticizing the religious leaders because he says you are all surface; you are just talking about things that are incidental—incidental, accidental, but not really substantial, meaningful, important, and grave.

So this is a time to **reflect then on our own lives and how they are really God's**, and how we have to return to God something, hopefully, that we are proud of. And that if what we return to God in the end is something that we are ashamed of, that already is the beginning of some sort of divine judgment, that we have to be ashamed of the life we have led, of the treasure we have made.

Now, on the other hand, as St. Paul points out, we have to be very convinced of God's mercy and judgment. **God's mercy is always helping us to change.** So if we are mixed up or we have made bad decisions or failed in something very important, well, God is always **ready to give us a new start.** But by that same token, **we have to be willing to give other people a new start as well**, and not hold their failures against them, as God doesn't hold our failures against us, always looking for something new, always giving a new opportunity.

And how long does this opportunity to renew oneself last? No one knows. In the past, the assumption often was that the day one died was the last day one could make any changes in one's life. Now since the revelations, alleged revelations, to Sister Faustina, **some believe that people can make changes and repent even after they die.** Well, perhaps this is true. It would be, again, in accord with the mercy of God. But, nonetheless, **it's a repentance that has to be delivered voluntarily and willfully. And there's no time like the present to make changes for the better.**