

Rev. Paul A. Hottinger

Our Mutual Interdependence Twenty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time/A
September 10, 2017 10:00 AM Ez 33:7-9; Rom 13:8-10; **Mt 18:15-20** (Our “Hearts on Fire” prayer is relevant for today’s gospel and today’s events.)

“For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”

We can see from this gospel reading that Jesus was very concerned that his disciples would have a sense that he would continue in their presence through time. He knew of his own demise; they probably didn’t anticipate the way it all happened. But **that he would continue to be with them was one of the most important ideas he left with them.** And this presence endures precisely where two or three gather; **it is an interrelationship. We need one another, not only to find God, but to maintain a sense of God’s enduring presence.** Unfortunately our lives speed along at a high velocity and we can end up being isolated from others and disconnected, and this can lead to a feeling of abandonment. **When we feel abandoned, we have to realize that God has not abandoned us; we have detached ourselves,** willingly or not, from the community. **Jesus really intends us to nourish and nurture each other.** We do this in many ways. Among the most important is **gathering together for worship, sharing in the Eucharist, and celebrating the mysteries of our salvation.**

But as you all know **there are many aspects of our modern world that militate against such healthy, holy, and wholesome practices.** But we can learn, and **we need to learn from the present moment.** Right now many people in our country are reeling from a least two **hurricanes,** maybe three or four on the way. Not only is nature turbulent, but North Korea is continuing its development of hydrogen bombs and missiles and shooting them all around the world, especially Japan and nearby islands. The potential for disaster and suffering is suddenly magnified exponentially. But none of these events are new in origin. They’ve all been brewing; it’s just all of a sudden they impinge on our awareness. But **North Korea** has been working for

years to develop its war capacities, and the Atlantic Ocean has been warming way too much over years now. That's what causes these hurricanes. So **we have to keep in mind that although we may not be paying attention to things, they are happening anyway.**

And in all of this we have to remember that **God is with us no matter what happens, but God is with us through others.** We need to make time in our lives for God. **We need to go about the many tasks** we have: our work responsibilities, our family responsibilities. They are important, but we don't just do them for their own sake, and we don't just do them for our own sake. **We do them for the sake of the kingdom to bring about God's idea of what life on earth can be,** and we are part of that whole process, or at least we are called to be. We can learn in life to endure much as long as we **keep our focus on the light who is Christ.** But if that light goes out, we will find it very hard to endure very much.

We need others, and they need us; **we live in mutual interdependence.** And not to rub it in, but in Texas there has often been a sort of pride in being the "Lone Star State," but all of a sudden they realize how much they need the rest of the states in the union. We have to learn this: our interdependence. We are not lone stars as individuals or as states. We have to eventually become a world community **where everyone helps everyone else.** And God teaches us through these various events of life. **What we have to do is be alert to the lessons God is trying to teach us, not think we already know everything.** Our "Hearts on Fire" prayer is relevant for today's gospel and today's events. It reads in part: "Help us to make visible your Kingdom of Love, Forgiveness and Mercy. Move our hearts, minds and hands to embrace your Kingdom and embody your dream for our earth." If this be the guiding prayer of our community, it will bear much fruit.