

Invitation and Response Saturday after Ash Wednesday February 17, 2018 8:15 AM
Is 58:9b-14; Lk 5:27-32 (Seven Holy Founders of the Servite Order) (Response is twofold. It's personal and it's social; and the two both have to be together.)

“The Lord will guide you always and give you plenty even on the parched land.”

We are reading from the prophet Isaiah and it's about the kind of response that God is looking for. **In the whole Old Testament the whole framework is invitation and response.** Everything is about invitation and response: the Law, the prophets, wisdom; it's all about invitation and response. Response is **twofold. It's personal and it's social;** and the two both have to be together. They can't be separated, but **unfortunately Christians have often separated them.** There are those Christians who devote themselves to some sort of personal spiritual perfection, but pay no heed to what's going on in their society, living as it were on an island in their own mind. Others seek to repair the evils of society without looking at themselves, without seeing where reparation and renewal is needed within their own lives.

Isaiah is trying to show how they have to go together, so he talks about the various matters that he is inviting people to do. One of them he says is to **refrain from oppression**—that would be social. Oppression is an unjust confinement or it is stealing people's labor—oppression. “If you **remove from your midst** oppression,” but also **“false accusation.”** Well actually false accusation can become a public matter, but it starts as a very private thing. It starts in one's own thinking, one's own inner talk, so to speak, not looking rightly at others. That's where it comes from—false accusation. It's false, so it's not right, and it's accusing. That of course is something the devil always does: he accuses. But often what the devil accuses people of is true; this is false. And **“malicious speech”**—think of how much you have heard in your life: negative comments, putting people down, undermining someone's reputation. That's malicious speech. “If you **bestow your bread on the hungry,**” that's social. There are hungry people out in the world. We can't just leave them; we have to approach them “and **satisfy the afflicted;** then light shall rise for you,” **for you as an individual when you do your best, for us as a people when we do our best.** “And the gloom shall be for you like midday; then the Lord will guide you always and give you plenty even on the parched land.”