

**Thursday, 17th Week of the Year/Feast of St. Alphonsus Liguori**

Aug. 1, 2019 7:30 p.m. Migrant Camp Mass Kuehnle Farms, Hartford

*(Readings of the Day: Ex.40:16-21,34-37; Mt. 13:47-53)*

After a long, hot day of hard work in the fields or at whatever other job you may have had, one of the last things you may want to hear about is: hard work!

And yet, that's exactly what both the Scripture Readings we just listened to deal with this evening.

Wouldn't it be nicer to just hear one of the many beautiful Scripture Readings that talk about the total happiness we will have when we get to Heaven, where, Jesus tells us, there will be no more sorrow, pain, difficulties or tears, but only complete happiness and eternal rest.

Doesn't that sound wonderful?

And yet, in our first Reading we heard about a "construction project", as Moses himself, God's personally-appointed Leader of the People of Israel who was charged with delivering the people from their slavery in Egypt, through the 40 years of wandering in the desert, and to eventually lead them into the Promised Land, where God promised them they would find a "land flowing with milk and honey".

But for that very long journey to be successful, Moses and the People had to be led by God, Who had promised that He would be with them all along the way.

God's Presence among them was symbolized by the two stone tablets which contained the 10 Commandments that God had given directly to Moses as the "rules" by which the People of God were supposed to live their lives.

Probably most of us know the 10 Commandments "off by heart". We know that we are to love and serve only the one, true God; not false or strange gods; we are to hold God's Name in reverence, and we are to never take God's Name in vain; we are to keep Holy the Lord's Day, and to make sure that we always give God our praise and worship every week. And of course we are to treat everyone else---our parents, all people, with respect and dignity, never taking another's life, nor another's property, nor family.

As long as the people lived according to those basic Commandments, they knew that God would remain with them.

And so Moses was constructing a "Dwelling Place"---a kind of portable trailer, which contained what was called the "Ark of the Covenant", which held the two stone tablets of the 10 Commandments.

And Moses was building this "Dwelling Place" according to the measurements and specifications that God Himself had given him.

So, that was a hard job and an important project.

In this evening's Gospel, Jesus told a parable about "going fishing", but not for leisure or relaxation; this was the hard job of working a "dragnet". Even back in Jesus' day, it seems that they had problems with pollution, since the dragnet would catch all kinds of things when they dragged it along the bottom of the lake; some of what they caught was good and useful; other things were worthless and needed to be thrown away.

And so Jesus used this hard work as an image to compare with what will happen at the end of our lives, or at the end of the world.

God's Angels will come and, like a dragnet, catch all of us, and then separate us from those who are good, and those who are "worthless". The good will go to Heaven; the worthless into the "fiery furnace".

So, I'd have to say that these are pretty challenging Readings for us to hear after a long day of hard work.

And yet, those are the choices that all of us have in our lives.

We have been taught, from our earliest days, what is good and what is bad; we've been taught how to know the difference between right and wrong; and we've found out over our lifetime, sometimes in the hard way, that when we choose to live according to God's ways, we will eventually---one day---receive our eternal reward; and if we choose to live separated from God and God's ways, well, then, we will have to answer to God for that choice that we've made.

But the point is---and the Good News in all this is---that God does everything He can to help us to choose what is right and good and true.

Just like He did with Moses and the People of God thru the desert, God chooses to accompany us along our journey of faith as well. God wants to walk WITH us! Wherever we are; whatever we're doing; no matter what choices we have made. God NEVER abandons us; God is always with us!

And the most dramatic way that God has chosen to be with us is that He sent us His Son---Jesus---to be our Lord and Savior.

Jesus suffered incredible humiliation and torture carrying the Cross in our place; He died on the Cross to save us, and ALL people, from our/their sins; He rose again in Glory thereby promising us that when we choose to listen to and live according to His Word; when we choose to carry our own crosses; and when we choose to follow Him faithfully, to the best of our ability, throughout our lives, we will be saved.

God understands that our lives are filled with difficulties and challenges; God knows that our lives can be challenging; God wants to help us when we have problems to deal with, and when we experience some great sorrows. That's why God wants to "accompany" us along the

way, just as He did with Moses and the People of God until they got thru the desert and inherited the Promised Land.

Jesus does that for us. In this Mass we have listened to His Word, and very soon, we will receive Jesus Himself to be our Food and Drink---to give us spiritual nourishment---to be our refreshment from our labors and difficulties.

Let us never lose heart or give into life's discouragements. God our Father is always with us. Jesus has saved us from our sins and continues to be our Salvation. And God's Holy Spirit will continue to guide us, through the joys and sorrows of this life, until it is time for us, also, to inherit the Land flowing with milk and honey---our Promised Land of Heaven for our eternal rest.