

A NOTE FROM FATHER EICKHOFF

The translators responsible for translating the Mass from Latin to English managed to accomplish a miracle this week (the 6th Sunday of Ordinary Time). They made the first two couplets of the Opening Prayer of the Mass rhyme in English:

*O God, who teach us that you abide
In hearts that are just and true,*

*Grant that we may be so fashioned by your grace
As to become a dwelling pleasing to you.*

As much as we might admire the ability of the translators to make the English translation sound poetic, we should focus more on the meaning of the Opening Prayer. The prayer expresses in the first couplet two important facts that are crucial to our living our lives as followers of God. The first fact is that God desires to dwell with us. To be close to us, not in some generic sense, but rather so close as to live within our hearts. The second fact is that God will dwell with us if our lives are modeled after God Himself who is the very source of justice and truth. In other words, God will not dwell within a person who rejects the principles of which God is the source since to reject justice and truth is to reject God.

The second couplet informs us as to how to create “hearts that are just and true.” The lesson to learn here is that we human beings don’t create on our own “hearts that are just and true.” Instead, we rely on God’s help to create the conditions that allow God to dwell within us. God provides the necessary first step – without which all our efforts would be in vain – towards transforming our minds and hearts to a state that is pleasing to God. After this initial gift of grace and help we in response should strive to act in our lives in accordance with God’s teachings. These actions better align within us our hearts and minds towards justice and truth so that in time we are further transformed to be more like God in how we live and treat one another. We should make it a priority to pray to God asking for this gift of grace and help not only to begin this process for ourselves, but for others as well. And we should not cease to pray since we human beings are in constant need of God’s continuing help.

Finally, we might ask ourselves “why do we need to continually pray for God’s grace and help? Shouldn’t God just make us have hearts that are perfectly just and true?” I will not argue that it certainly would be nice if God were to do this. Everyone would simply do what is right and good. However, there is a severe downside to this. If God did this, then we human beings would have no free will. We human beings would have no ability to choose God, to choose the right and good, to choose to act with justice and truth. We would be automatons of God, not children of God with the ability to choose to love God and our neighbor. There is far more glory in creation and for ourselves when we human beings freely choose to ask for God’s grace and to act in accordance with the grace we have been given.

Yours in Christ,

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Pastor