

FIRST READING: Micah 7:14-15, 18-20

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Micah:

Shepherd your people with your staff, the flock of your inheritance, That dwells apart in a woodland, in the midst of Carmel. Let them feed in Bashan and Gilead, as in the days of old; As in the days when you came from the land of Egypt, show us wonderful signs. Who is there like you, the God who removes guilt and pardons sin for the remnant of his inheritance; Who does not persist in anger forever, but delights rather in clemency, And will again have compassion on us, treading underfoot our guilt? You will cast into the depths of the sea all our sins; You will show faithfulness to Jacob, and grace to Abraham, As you have sworn to our fathers from days of old.

The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL: Psalm 85:2-4, 5-6, 7-8

Lord, show us your mercy and love.

You have favored, O LORD, your land; you have brought back the captives of Jacob. You have forgiven the guilt of your people; you have covered all their sins. You have withdrawn all your wrath; you have revoked your burning anger.

Lord, show us your mercy and love.

Restore us, O God our savior, and abandon your displeasure against us. Will you be ever angry with us, prolonging your anger to all generations?

Lord, show us your mercy and love.

Will you not instead give us life; and shall not your people rejoice in you? Show us, O LORD, your kindness, and grant us your salvation.

Lord, show us your mercy and love.

Gospel: Matthew 12:46-50

+ A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew:

While Jesus was speaking to the crowds, his mother and his brothers appeared outside, wishing to speak with him. Someone told him, "Your mother and your brothers are standing outside, asking to speak with you." But he said in reply to the one who told him, "Who is my mother? Who are my brothers?" And stretching out his hand toward his disciples, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of my heavenly Father is my brother, and sister, and mother."

The Gospel of the Lord.

Reflection for the 16th Tuesday of the Year II

God is the shepherd of God's people. He leads the people with God's presence. With God's presence, we are holy. God's people live apart to serve God and each other. This is the biblical definition of holiness that we have heard in this passage. God dwells with God's people, wherever they live. Holiness is never more than a thought away for we live with God's love within us. God is closer than the blood that courses through our bodies and the breath that fills our lungs.

God's ability to forgive is as profound as God's nature; love that is infinite, eternal and unconditional. God delights in forgiving sinners. We can delight in eating ice-cream. Think of that image the next time we ask God to forgive us or when we forgive someone else! We can step on spiders, bugs and ants. That is the way God treats our guilt! When forgiven, God remembers not what we have done but frees us and takes delight in us. When we are unfaithful to God, God's fidelity deepens. This is powerful as good news. We all need to hear it and experience the fullness of God's mercy.

This gospel has a disturbing image; Jesus' mother and brothers want to see him. Wait! Wasn't Jesus an only child and his sinless mother always his greatest fan, supporter and disciple? Actually this version of the story is also found in the gospels of Mark and Luke. Why were they standing outside? Perhaps they weren't all that supportive of Jesus and his mission. He never invited them into the crowd. He turned to the people with him instead and included them as members of his family. He even defined what was necessary to become his family; to do the will of God. We pray to do God's will each time we pray the prayer Jesus taught us. We strive to do God's will as we live life.

The words of Micah and words of Jesus have some important implications for us. We can carry burdens of guilt and shame for our sins. The image that God delights in forgiving us makes a whole new dimension for us as we celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation. God's forgiveness heals our guilt and moves our sin far from us. Jesus' words, today, remind us, as believers who gather in Jesus' name, of our relationship with him and each other as family. We are mother, brother and sister, together in his Father's love. Can we define Church in these terms as a family?

May we take delight in one another as God delights in us.

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