

**21st Sunday in Ordinary Time
August 21, 2016**

In his general audience from the first week of March this year, Pope Francis spoke about God's mercy and correction toward his people, saying: "As a father, he teaches them and corrects them when they make mistakes, helping them to develop and grow in goodness... a loving but also a careful and strict father, turns to Israel, accusing them of disloyalty and corruption, in order to lead them back to the path of justice" (March 2, 2016). I wanted to start with this wisdom from our Holy Father, so that we can see our readings today for the hope that they truly bring.

Sometimes God is hard on us. Jesus was certainly hard on the people as he made his way up to Jerusalem in the reading from Luke's Gospel. He told them a parable about people who were not paying attention to the Master's will. They waited outside, ignoring his love and his ways, and when they tried to enter the way was closed. He told them this saying: that those who thought they were first, will be last. This is a warning for us in our own lives. Often we get complacent in our prayer, in our charity, and in our care for God's people. We simply assume we are in right relationship. God sometimes needs to give us correction so that we can return to the path of justice.

Have you ever experienced the discipline of the Lord? It comes to us all. But as the Letter to the Hebrews reminds us: “Do not disdain the discipline of the Lord or lose heart when reproved by him; for whom the Lord loves, he disciplines; he scourges every son he acknowledges... all discipline seems a cause not for joy but for pain, yet later it brings the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who are trained by it.” Do not turn away from God’s corrections. Give him thanks and learn from them.

When God is challenging you to love more deeply, to give more of yourself, to trust him more, then do what the psalmist did and give him praise. “Praise the Lord all you nations; glorify him, all you peoples! For steadfast is his kindness toward us, and the fidelity of the Lord endures forever.” Our God loves us, so he calls us to change. He loves us, so he corrects us so that we can love him more.

“So strengthen your drooping hands and your weak knees” (Hebrews), my brothers and sisters. Our God shows his mercy to us by showing us the way to deeper love. He is our merciful father, and we are his beloved children. “Go out to all the world and tell the Good News” (Mark, responsorial). May Mary, our Mother, help us to see God’s grace in our lives, and in the lives of our brothers and sisters.