



Fr. Matt's Musings

July 7, 2017

During weekday and Sunday Masses, we are reading from Matthew's gospel. This morning's reading was the call of St. Matthew. It has particular appeal for me, for obvious reasons. However, at the end of this passage, Jesus has one of his encounters with the religious authorities who are not happy that he is eating with tax collectors and sinners. On three separate occasions in Matthew's gospel, when these encounters arise, Jesus will call the scribes and Pharisees to mercy: "Go and learn the meaning of the words, *It is mercy I seek, not sacrifice.*"

A few weeks ago, I heard a Jewish rabbi reflect on the importance of the divine name. She reminded us that God's name revealed to Moses on Mount Sinai, Yahweh, is too holy for a devout Jew to pronounce. In its place, there are alternatives. The two most popular in the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament) are Lord and God. Lord is used over seven hundred times and means, "Mercy." God is used over three hundred times and means, "Justice." Her conclusion is that God is twice as merciful as God is just.

What a great invitation for us to grow in the likeness of our merciful God who prefers mercy over justice. Many times, I find comfort in God's mercy for those whom I love and for myself. The task is to allow God to be God because God also shows mercy to those whom I find difficult. I try to remember what one of my theology professors once said in a class discussion on the topic of God's tremendous mercy: "Just remember, if we are lucky enough to pass through the pearly gates one day, there will be people on the other side who will look at us and say, 'Wow, there is Matt Hillyard. I am surprised to see him here.'" Let us strive to be merciful and compassionate in a world which is not always either.

Live Jesus!

Fr. Matt

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