33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time

Proverbs 31: 10-13, 19-20, 30-31

Psalm 128

1 Thessalonians 5:1-6

Matthew 25:14-30

Thanksgiving is coming up. And the Christmas trees are already up in the stores. Rush. Rush. Rush. Let’s slow down a bit. Let’s spend some time in thanksgiving. After all that is what the Mass is all about. This is really clear in the Eucharistic Prayer – the prayer of thanksgiving and praise. We are called to thank God for all the gifts we have received, including our joys and sorrows, all of which, through love, work towards our benefit. (The United States Catholic Catechism for Adults, USCC, 2006, pp.228 and 468)

We prepare for this prayer of thanksgiving by listening to the Word of God. Today we hear we are to appreciate the value of our wives. Know that we are children of the light. Be productive in the gifts, talents, and graces we have been given. At the end of the first and second reading we hear, “This is the Word of the Lord,” and we respond, “Thanks be to God.”

At the beginning of the Eucharistic Prayer we hear, “Let us give thanks to the Lord our God” and we respond, “It is right and just.” “It is truly right and just that we should always give you thanks, Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God.”

Then the centerpiece of the prayer, the consecration. Let’s take a second look at what happens.

“At the time he was betrayed and entered willingly into his Passion, he took bread and, giving thanks, broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying: ‘Take this all of you, and eat of it, for this is my body, which will be given up for you.’”

Jesus took bread and gave thanks. That must have been a bitter sweet moment for Jesus as he sat with his friends to share a meal of thanksgiving. He knew what was going to be ahead of him. He even made the meal a sign of sacrifice – his.

His body would be the ultimate sacrifice for the salvation of all – his friend’s and all mankind. This thanksgiving meal would be a constant reminder that through his sacrifice all would be kosher with his Father in heaven.

The peculiar thing that I would like to point up is when Jesus took his bread-body-sacrifice and shared it with his disciples, he would have had looked around the table at each person there. Sitting with him was a denier, a denier, a denier, a denier, a denier, a betrayer, a denier, a denier, a denier, a denier, a denier, a weak and foolish lie-er. They would hurt him most when he began his passion.

And yet he gave thanks.

“In a similar way, when supper was ended, he took the chalice and, once more giving thanks, he gave it to his disciples, saying: ‘Take this, all of you, and drink from it, for this is the chalice of my blood, the blood of the new and eternal covenant, which will be poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this in memory of me.’”

How could he do it? How could he have a thanksgiving meal with the people who would, in just a moment afterwards, run away for even knowing him?

I think Jesus gave thanks giving first of all to this Father who would always have his back, even when the back of Jesus would be scourged. Jesus knew that the people around his thanksgiving meal table would give in to weakness and hurt him very much. He also knew that these were his family and one day believe in Jesus and his message so much that they would die for his memory. They loved him and he loved them very much. Jesus gave thanks to his Father for always being with him and gave thanks to his Father for the friends (though flawed) he gathered around his thanksgiving table.

As we give thanksgiving on Thursday of this week, as we look across the table, whom will we see? And cannot we give thanksgiving to our Father in heaven and to our Father in heaven for the people He has given us to be in our lives.

Let us now continue our Eucharist of thanksgiving and look across the table at who all are gathered here – look at them with love.