

JULY 18, 2010

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

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FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

Dear Parishioners,

Lately some of the newspapers and magazines I subscribe to have been their summer book lists. The idea being that on leisurely summer vacation days we can all get in that reading which we never quite manage to do at other times in the year. Actually, it has occurred to me more than once that if I subscribed to fewer newspapers and magazine I could read more books. However, it's too hard for me to read a book and watch a baseball game at the same time. I guess I haven't yet mastered "multitasking." However, I do hope to get some extra book reading in while I'm at the beach this week. One book I'm taking along is *Bleak House* by Charles Dickens. Some say it's his best work. With nearly nine hundred pages it is certainly one of his longest. I may need two weeks at the beach to finish it.

In addition to fiction, hopefully, there is a place on our personal summer reading lists for spiritual reading. Reading from the lives of the saints and other spiritual masters can help us on our own journey with the Lord. Over the next few weeks I will be using this space to share with you some excerpts from a spiritual book I have read. *Besides, I'll be too busy reading on the beach to write a column for next week's bulletin.*

One of my favorite spiritual writers is Romano Guardini. Msgr. Guardini was a German priest who lived in the first half of the twentieth century. The following excerpt is from a book called *The Living God*. It was compiled from a series of talks Msgr. Romano Guardini gave to his own congregation. Although it was published nearly fifty years ago, it deals with timeless truths and it still has much to say to us today. I hope you find Msgr. Guardini's reflections helpful to your own spiritual life.

With my prayers,

Fr. Conley

"Providence" from *The Living God*

By Msgr. Romano Guardini

The idea of Providence constantly recurs in the New Testament and expresses the essence of what Christ brought to man. A number of Christ's sayings refer to it: the one about the sparrow not falling from the roof without the Father's knowledge; about the birds He feeds and the flowers He clothes. We are exhorted not to worry about food and drink; to pray for bread today and tomorrow, entrusting the future to the Father's hands. Again and again the mystery of Providence is expressed in the words "Your Father in heaven . . ."

These sayings all imply that man's whole life and existence and everything that belongs to him is surrounded by an infinite goodness. Nothing that happens is purely accidental; the whole course of things is guided by a

loving concern for man's welfare. We must not accept this too glibly. When we look around the world it does not seem that things really work out quite like that. Events go on their relentless way – and how often they ignore the individual and his happiness! Good men pine away and are unable to exert their influence to the full: they might have done so much good with their life-giving hands. Creative men die before they have borne their fruit; others prosper seemingly unjustly. The defenseless are violated. Pure thoughts can find no scope for expression; precious things are destroyed, but inferior, mediocre, vulgar things thrive and flourish. The world sometimes appears to be governed by senseless despotism and destructive chance. Sometimes it is as though a malicious spirit were at work destroying a thing of beauty just when it is on the point of blossoming, or a rare destiny the moment it is about to be fulfilled.

"Providence" means, however, that there is a seeing Mind behind everything that happens and that I am the object of its seeing. It means that provision is being made for what is good for me. It means that there are eyes in the world which see everything, from which nothing is hidden that may injure or benefit me. It means that "not a hair of my head shall fall" without being noticed and assessed with regard to my welfare and salvation. It means that there is significance in everything that happens in the world, and a heart, a concern, and a power stronger than all the powers of the world which is able to fulfill the purposes of its care for man.

The idea of Providence is grounded on the whole audacity of a living faith. **To believe in Providence, means to transform one's whole conception of the world.** It ceases to be the world of natural science. Providence means that everything in the world retains its own nature and reality but serves a supreme purpose which transcends the world: the loving purpose of God.

But this love of God for His creatures whom He has made His children is alive like that of a human being for his dear ones. The love of a father for his child pursues him in all its developments, in all its fortunes, in all its ever-changing activities and decisions. So too the love of God for man is alive and ever new. And the whole world is drawn into the orbit of God's constant care for man. It embraces the whole world, past and present, in every passing moment of its existence and activity.

And so the world is renewed in every moment of time. Every moment has only one existence. It has not existed before and it will not come again. It springs from the eternity of God's love and takes all Being and all that is and all that happens into itself for the sake of God's children. **Everything that happens comes to me from God, from His love.** It calls me. It challenges me. It is His will that I should live and act and grow in it and become the person it is His will that I should be. And the world is to be perfected into that which it can become only through man – that is, through me.

