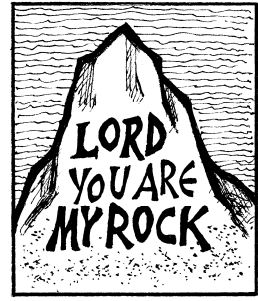


9<sup>th</sup> Sunday (A) June 1, 2008

Deut 11:18, 26-28 Rom 3:21-25, 28

St. Matthew 7:21-27

Fr. Vince Alagia, S.J.



### ***CURSES? OR BLESSINGS? WHICH?***

What we listen to in the first reading is Moses' last appeal to the people as he nears the end of his life. He knows his days are few. The choices he has for leading them are dwindling. What does he do? He calls the people together and after reviewing with them the statutes and laws ordained by God, he gives them choice of choices. "See," he tells them, "I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse: the blessing so long as you obey the commandments of the Lord, your God; the curse, if you do not obey." A simple directive from Moses, calling for either a 'yes' or 'no' on the part of the people. The choice is theirs, no 'ands,' 'ifs,' or 'buts:' Obey God's teaching and your life will enjoy great blessing. Disobey God's teaching and you life will know great sorrow and pain that cannot be described.

What would be our response to such a directive? Perhaps: "It just can't be that simple." We know it is not that simple, and Moses was not suggesting that following God's commandments would eliminate pain and suffering, not know life's difficulties. What he is saying is that people who are faithful to God's way of life ordinarily bring curses on themselves. Life has enough challenges without us adding to those challenges the consequences of stupid and unwise decisions contrary to God's way of life. Every one of us knows the challenges of living out our lives faithful to our commitments to each other, married or single. Then, too, even within the

states of life to which we commit ourselves, we know the challenges: truthfulness in conversation, integrity in business, honesty among friends, even diplomacy among nations and justice within society. We have to believe, and we are a people of faith, hope, and love even when the sun isn't shining on us, when things are tough. Jesus says the same thing through the sermons to be found in St. Matthew's Gospel, e.g., the Sermon on the Mount, and it is summarized at the end of that particular Sermon with a parable, the one read today at this Eucharist. If we choose the case inscribed with 'Blessing,' our lives will be like the wise person who builds a house upon a rock. When the storms rage and the winds howl, when the foundations of our lives are shaken to the core, that house will stand.

And what are these teachings? You know them as well as I do. It might be a good time in these moments to acknowledge once more our spiritual strengths and weaknesses. It never hurts to hear again what is important, like it or not. Simply they would include but not be limited to the following: live life seasoned with forgiveness, let go of worry and lean your life against the wall of trust. Do to others what you would want them to do to you. Keep your word. Tell the truth. Give generously rather than grabber. Serve God and especially through others. The Sermon on the Mount has many more simple truths that, if followed, lead to blessing and interior peace and joy. Let us be persons who choose blessing and who run away from the case inscribed 'Curse.'

Jesus through Moses says, "I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse." The key word is "today." As painful or embarrassing as our choices may have been yesterday, there is little we can do to exchange 'yesterday' with 'today.' We spend so much time and energy trying to relive the past, remold it, regretting things, remembering our failures. And, for all

of that, there are many decisions to be made today that are more important to think about and work through. Just two cases, are in the game for us: "Blessing" or "Curse." Choose "Blessing" and in so doing, choose life in all its fullness in Jesus Christ. To this let us say: Amen – and move ahead.