

### 18th Sunday In Ordinary Time

...when he got the news, he slipped away to an out of the way place by himself...MT 14:13

When I got the news: Gaza, Syria, border crossing children-scorned, haters screaming "AMNESTY NEVER!" Ukraine, kidnapped girls in Africa, Downed air-plane.....I felt I needed my yearly retreat more than ever. I had begun to feel, worn down--discouraged, which ultimately means losing heart.

So Buddy and I are in this beautiful "out of the way place." Pictured here on the grounds of St. John Vianney Church in Sedona.



NO TV. Only recorded sessions of the Spiritual exercises,

Reading Tomas Halik's book: "PATIENCE WITH GOD."

Praying...

Reflecting...

Quieting down...Buddy teaches me that. He does not mind laying around and then sniffing the flowers.

So in today's Second reading I feel replenishing to my depleted spirit:

"Not troubles, not hard times, not hatred....." Can separate us from the love of Christ.

My retreat prayer has come to be: "O God, grant me a repentant and MELLOW HEART, A MELLOW SPIRIT,  
so I can be patient with self and the chaotic world around me."

And according to Halik: patient with God.

I have a keen interest in politics and most of the news there is disheartening....there it is again: losing full hearted ness.

And I thought of Vice President Joe Biden who has to play second fiddle, but who does so with a joyful heart! Perhaps because he knows a lot about suffering and loss: his wife and child early on in his life through a tragic accident, and his own narrow brush with death. He maintains a mellow heart. So much so that his "enemies" on the "other side" simply LIKE him. So when Arch Conservative Republican southerner Jesse Helms was about to die, he asked Joe Biden to give his eulogy, which Joe did. In the mire and muck and enmity of today's politics, Joe stands out as a "happy warrior"

So I pray that I would refrain from demonizing politicians who do not March to my tune. That is my temptation which only leads to cynicism and frustration.

And as I pray about that, I realize how much I want everything to be under my control, so then comes the discouragement....I would like to play God and get things to go my way. And I am not God.

As I listen to the Retreat Master, he speaks of the evil spirit wanting to "harden our hearts."

Yet we have been given "a new" heart filled with faith, hope, and love.

The evil spirit is the enemy of hope!

So discouragement is a hardening of the heart, and not the work of the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit of evil wants to rile and agitate our heart!

The Holy Spirit wants "to fill the hearts of the faithful with the fire of love and renew the face of the earth!"

Years ago, with the guidance of a wise and very spiritual woman psychiatrist , Dr. Barbara Heaney I came to learn I was living out a script:  
The Myth of Sisyphus who pushed the rock up the hill til it eventually rolled back and crushed him. Barbara helped me to change my unhappy story to "THE LITTLE ENGINE THAT COULD,"

( it is possible you may be living a story too? Is it good, or leading to a sad ending?  
It is a grace to learn the story we are writing and if necessary change its direction and ending.)

What I have rediscovered on these retreat days is that THE LITTLE ENGINE has jumped the track, and old Sisyphus has tried to take the controls.

So as I approach my 82 birthday next week, and at midpoint in my retreat, I pray to "get back on track." At this moment, Buddy just got up from his bed...walked over to me, gave me the eye, stretched, and then walked right back to bed and curled up and went right back to sleep. All is well with his world.

Of course, not all is well with your world, nor mine.

But it is all we have, and we are blest to be a part,of it, despite all its tragedies.

"Lift up your hearts!" Enjoins the Preface.

I pray that for myself, and especially for dear friends whose hearts I know are heavy  
At this point in their lives.

BREAKFAST QUESTION: How is my heart?

PERSONAL REFLECTION: What is the life story I have chosen to write?

Does it need a new and happier chapter?