

## Commentary on the Gospel for Thu, Jun 21st 2018

### Memorial of Saint Aloysius Gonzaga, Religious

Today there are two sets of Scripture Readings for the Eucharistic Liturgy. There is the Gospel reading for Thursday of the Eleventh Week in Ordinary Time from Matthew presenting an instruction on prayer and especially on the praying the words of the Our Father. The other Gospel is for the Jesuit feast of St. Aloysius Gonzaga whom the Church celebrates on this, his four-hundred and fiftieth birthday. If you are interested in his biography, there are several online reviews of his life. Just a few helpful notes about him here will be enough.

He was born into Italian royalty and wealth. He was, from an early age, attracted to “holy things”. His father expected him to become a military leader and enter the ways of wealth, violence and irreverent relationships. He grew up resisting the life-style around him and his father’s wishes. He was allowed to follow his desires for the “holy life” and so entered the novitiate of the Society of Jesus in Rome.

At the age of twenty-three, while tending the victims of a vicious plague in Rome, Aloysius contracted the same sickness and died a “holy death” at such an early age. The Church declared him a saint 125 years later and presented him as the patron of youth with special attention to chastity.

The two different Gospel Readings both have something to say about the “holy life” in our violent and irreverent world of today. Matthew has Jesus reminding His disciples not to pile up lots of words to make sure God hears them. Mark’s Gospel from chapter ten, relates Jesus’ words about not piling up anything as signs of worthiness, identity and especially holiness. The prayer which Jesus encourages His followers to pray is centered in our identity as already belonging to God as God’s family. We are encouraged to pray with hands wide open as children waiting to receive “Daily Bread”. The hands that are to be extended in receptivity remain open also in the gesture of a desire to share what has been received. “Daily Bread” is not just “mine” but “ours”. Our Father has other daughters and sons and we become part of their receiving their “Daily Bread”. I am not merely mine but am identified by all that I have received for distribution not for self-establishment.

The reception extends as well to being forgiven as a gift; it is a part of “Daily Bread”. The prayer of Jesus encourages us to share the “Daily Bread” of forgiveness in our forgiving others, not judiciously, but "reveationally." All we have, including our being forgiven, is not just for me, but for us, God’s family.

Our experiences of being slighted, injured, slandered and betrayed are difficult to be healed. We find it not easy to forgive ourselves as well as to forgive others. We have a strong sense of Justice in such a way that revenge seems the only way for Justice to be served. In a sense grudges, resulting from injury, become a possession of power and we can hold them as a treasure for a long time, just waiting for that power, that richness, to be served upon our “injurer”.

When Jesus tells His followers about how difficult it is to enter heaven for those who are rich, wealthy and powerful because of their possessions, one of those riches would be all the “grudgeables” to which we can cling more than home, family and accomplishments. It is some comfort that God does not

forgive us as a reward for our forgiving others. Jesus' prayer does not say that. God forgives us first and waits for us to be Daily Bread rather than the Bread of Affliction. Saint Aloysius pray for us to have a poor and pure heart.

Larry Gillick, S.J.-Creighton University's Deglman Center of Ignatian Spirituality