

► Sunday, August 24, 2008, Twenty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time

*Is 22:19-23; Ps 138:1-2, 2-3, 6, 8; Rom 11:33-36; Mt 16:13-20*

Week # 1: Main theme: God's desire for our happiness; moral laws lead to happiness.

Who do we say that Jesus is? Hopefully our definition would include the word "God"! But who do we say that God is? Is He a remote law-giver in the sky who gives us arbitrary rules that are impossible to follow? That is a common misconception, even among baptized Christians. What are God's moral laws for, however? What is the Church's teaching on morals for? Are these instruments of a jealous tyrant? Or do they put pleasure in the context of God's wise and loving design for reality, in which human dignity and happiness require that we embrace pleasure intelligently and according to the demands of true love? It is only in terms of God's plan for sexuality that human beings can treat each other with respect rather than selfishly. When wrenched out of the context of the one-flesh union of husband and wife open to life, sexual pleasure does not serve our good. Peter today shows that he trusts in Jesus as his Lord; can we trust that what God wants for our lives is meant to make us happy?

**Bulletin: "In the Christian view, chastity by no means signifies rejection of human sexuality or lack of esteem for it: rather it signifies spiritual energy capable of defending love from the perils of selfishness and aggressiveness, and able to advance it towards its full realization."**

**Pope John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, #33**