

## *25th Sunday in Ordinary Time*

Several friends tell me this week they received a suspicious email purporting to be from me. They did not open the attachment. The return address used my name, but it wasn't from me. Someone somehow has stolen my address book, and once that's happened it's hard to stop whatever that person will send. Spoofing is when someone pretends to be me so that they can trick you into downloading malware; phishing is when someone pretends to be me to trick you into giving up sensitive information about your credit card. It can happen to you, and it probably has.

Why do people do this? Sadly, there are people who enjoy creating chaos in the lives of others. They think it's funny to turn other people into fools. By embarrassing others, they perversely think more highly of themselves. We expect some of this from children and teens because they have not yet fully matured, but some people never develop a better sense of their own self-worth along with a desire for the good of others.

At the end of each reading at mass, the reader describes what we just heard as, "The Word of the Lord." But today's first reading contained the thoughts of the wicked. The Book of Wisdom was probably written shortly before Jesus was born. It helps people develop true wisdom to guide their days. The book does not concern being smart in school as much as being wise in life. It helps people make good decisions. If you're also smart at school, you will probably make better decisions, but any emotionally healthy person should be able to learn right from wrong and make the right choice.

Today's first reading shares the thoughts of wicked people plotting against a person who is just. They say, "Let us beset the just one.... With revilement and torture let us put the just one to the test.... Let us condemn him to a shameful death; for according to his own words, God will take care of him." In today's gospel Jesus predicts he will be handed over to men who will kill him. But, he says, God will take care of him. He will rise on the third day. In the first reading we hear a similar plot afoot: Some just person, we don't know who, has made someone angry, we don't know who. The just one believes that God will preserve him from all adversity, so the wicked decide to go after him - partly because the just one is an obstacle to their wicked plans and partly because the just one asked for it, saying God would take care of him. The wicked say, "Let's find out."

This kind of evil thinking is still around us in people who abuse the internet at home and shoot their guns on our streets. It reaches horrible proportions in places like Syria, where Christians are imprisoned, tortured, exiled, and killed. Most of us are not tempted to commit such acts of violence and chaos, but many of us are tempted to shame and embarrass others. It can happen when we're driving a car or reprimanding children. It can happen between spouses. We all have to be careful lest we think that the only way to build ourselves up is to put someone else down. When we help others achieve a better life, even our enemies, we are practicing true wisdom. That will thwart the plans of the wicked. God will take care of us.

*Sunday, September 20, 2015*