

**10th Sunday in Ordinary Time**  
**Hos 6:3-6; Ps 50; Rom 4:18-25; Mt 9:9-13**

by Dr. Emilio G. Chávez  
St. Vincent de Paul Regional Seminary  
Boynton Beach, FL

The topic of our readings this Sunday is the contrast between external piety and that which is truly pleasing and acceptable to God. Hosea was a prophet who, like his contemporary Amos, lambasted the incompatibility, or rather, futility, of lots of religious pomp if there is neglect of the poor and lack of genuine intimacy with (“knowledge” of) God. God prefers “love” (in Hebrew, *hesed*, where “Hasidic” comes from) and “knowledge” to sacrificial offerings of animals which could be purchased. Matthew liked this phrase so much he quotes it twice (Mt 9:13; 12:7). The psalm makes the same point, as does Prov 15:8.

Now, what is *hesed*, often translated “love” or “mercy”? It is often found in combination with “fidelity” in Ex 34:6, where Yahweh is said to be “rich in love and fidelity.” *hesed* in the Old Testament indicates unexpected acts of kindness, which seem to be undeserved (Jacob feels this way in Gen 32:11); David’s act of kindness to Israel’s enemies, the Ammonites, led to their disbelief and insulting of David’s emissaries, 2 Sm 10:1-5). This way of acting was what Jesus did to the utmost, and it is what Jas 3:17 calls “wisdom from above.” In fact, what Jesus reveals to us is summarized as “grace and truth” in Jn 1:14, 17; “grace and truth” are probably the Greek equivalents of the Hebrew words for “love and fidelity.”

This is the attitude and behavior Abraham showed. He believed and obeyed God despite all appearances; this “fidelity” was reckoned to him as righteousness (it “justified” him, Gen 15:6; Rom 4:9, 22). His faith was in the God who created, and who recreates, from nothing, and who can raise up the dead to new life. It made of him a real *hasid*, a “friend” of God, Jas 2:23. This is what Matthew also did, when Jesus called him. Matthew the wealthy (and probably corrupt) tax collector left everything to follow Jesus the healer. He recognized his need as a “sinner” rather than think of himself as “righteous” (cf. Lk 18:9-14). But as we saw last week, for Matthew it is not a matter of mere words or even external offerings (cf. Mk 12:41-44). Our world can only be healed if we follow Jesus wholeheartedly.