

Commentary on the Readings for January 29, 2017

The Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

The Readings for today extol the many blessings that God wants to shower on those who are humble and faithful to Him, not out of fear of punishment or servitude, but out of love. Those who do so are called "**disciples**" (at least in the New Testament). This designates a certain loyalty. **WE** are the disciples of today, and it behooves us to listen and take note. Let us see how this is illustrated in all of the readings.

In the **First Reading** from the *Prophet Zephaniah (2:3, 3:12-13)*, the Prophet is preaching to the people of Judah during the last years of the Jewish monarchy (late 7th century BC) imploring them to "*seek the Lord in humility and obedience.*" Otherwise, there will be only a small "remnant" left to carry on their heritage. Unfortunately, the Prophet's words fell on deaf ears, and the country was exiled to Babylon. After fifty years in exile, a small remnant (of Jews) did return, humbled and contrite. They had no recourse but to "*take refuge in the name of the Lord.*"

The **Responsorial Psalm (146:6-10)** is a prayer that appears to be answers to prayers. Essentially, they are promises of what God will do for those who are humble and faithful to Him. We have learned that God's love is eternal, but mankind has difficulty in taming his own nature, his desires and his wants, to conform to the Lord's ways of doing things. However, that is what we are being asked to do. Lent (which is coming soon) is the perfect time to review and adjust our wayward journey through life.

In the **Second Reading**, from St. Paul's *First Letter to the Corinthians (1:26-31)*, Paul is addressing new converts who have come from a pagan background and have found new life in Jesus Christ. Paul is saying that it is not necessary to be rich or famous or highly educated to be a true disciple of Christ. All it takes is sincerity, honesty and most of all humility.

In the **Gospel Reading** from the *Gospel of Matthew (5:1-12a)*, we hear the familiar list of Beatitudes or blessings. Because they are so familiar, we often let them slip over our ears without really taking them in or trying to understand them. However, if we were to change the first few words from "**Blessed are...**" (or, in some Bibles it reads, "**Happy are...**") to something more common such as "**The reward of a disciple is.....**" and then go on, we would get a better idea of what Jesus is saying and promising to His disciples. Let me demonstrate:

The reward of a true disciple who is poor in spirit, his (or hers) is the kingdom of heaven.

The reward of a true disciple who mourns or suffers, he (or she) will be comforted.

The reward of a true disciple who is meek and humble, he (or she) will inherit the land.

I am sure that you get the idea now. Jesus is ready to give all that we need in this life for entry into eternal life if we are true and faithful to Him, His teachings and His Church. There is so much more that we can learn about Jesus Christ and what better time to begin than NOW! Something to think about during your Prayer Time this week! **MFB**