

Commentary on the Readings for February 5, 2017

The Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

In the Readings for today, we are reminded of our need to be mindful of the health and welfare of those less fortunate than ourselves; and there are many, not only in far-off countries, but right here in our own area.

In the **First Reading**, from the *Prophet Isaiah (58:7-10)*, we hear the prophet chastising the rich and powerful people of the 5th century BC for not looking after the poor, the hungry, the oppressed and homeless. Selfishness and greed were some of the reasons for the fall of the Jewish monarchy, and now they (selfishness and greed) are rising again to be a major issue among the Jewish people. However, he concludes that charity toward those less fortunate can bring much spiritual freedom to the heart and mind.

The **Responsorial Psalm, (112:4-9)**, is a prayer that continues the same thought pattern of the blessings that come to those who share their time, talent and treasures with those in need.

In the **Second Reading**, from St. Paul's *First Letter to the Corinthians (2:1- 5)*, Paul tells us something about himself. We know, from other writings, that Paul was well educated and probably well off financially. However, after his conversion, he gave up everything to preach the gospel. In doing so, he did not approach people as a person of power and means, but rather as a poor itinerant preacher. In this way the words of the Gospel, the "Spirit and Power" of God, would shine through and be more important than the one who delivered them.

The **Gospel Reading** is from the *Gospel of Matthew (5:13-16)*. This short passage follows immediately after Jesus' pronouncement of the Beatitudes. The symbols of salt and light are used here to explain how *service to others* can lead both the giver and the receiver into a closer walk with Jesus Christ. "Salt" has many uses, but the one that we most often think about is as a food enhancer, to bring out the best in food. When we help to bring out the "best" in someone else, we help ourselves as well. When we help others to "see the light" through our example, we both gain insight into our role in God's Plan of Salvation.

As we approach the holy season of **Lent**, let us think seriously about doing something positive to help others less fortunate. Rather than "giving up" something like food or smoking or television, try to do something positive such as helping out at the Food Bank, or St. Vincent de Paul Center, or visiting and helping out one or more "shut ins" or just praying for those who can't do any of those acts of mercy. The Apostle James tells us in his *Letter* that "*faith without good works is dead, no faith at all.*" (See **James 2:26**) So, during this Lent, let your faith shine through your good works. Something to think about during your Prayer Time this week! **MFB**