

Commentary on the Readings for November 5, 2023

The 31st Sunday in Ordinary Time

The theme of the readings for this Sunday is Humility and Sincerity, even when honor or tribute might seem more important. Humility, as used here is not timidity, but rather recognizing the gifts we have been given are from God (whether talents, status or position). When we use them for His honor and glory with any degree of success, they are, in reality, the Spirit of God working in and through us. So we have no reason or need in soliciting honors or tribute. Let us see how this is illustrated in the readings.

The **First Reading** is from the ***Prophet Malachi (1:14b-2:2b, 8-10)***. This was a warning from God through the Prophet Malachi to the priests of the Jewish people after the Babylonian Exile (6th Century BC) that their sacrifices were contemptible because they were not offered with honesty and sincerity. The purpose of this reading for us today is to examine our minds and hearts to determine if we are offering our prayer time, our Mass time and our good deeds to God with honesty and sincerity. And yet, there is more that God is asking of us. This will come out in the following readings.

The **Responsorial Psalm (131:1-3)**. This short prayer is one that we should all know and offer to God daily. It is a prayer of sincere humility and trust. But could we say this prayer with all sincerity? We might be able to fool the world around us, but we can't fool God for an instant.

The **Second Reading** is from ***St. Paul's First Letter to the Thessalonians (2:7b-9, 13)***. In this passage, we hear how the Thessalonians responded to Paul's teachings with sincerity and now they are bearing fruit (in a spiritual sense). It was due to the Spirit working through Paul and the honesty and sincerity with which Paul delivered his message in the beginning: *"...how we exhorted every one of you as a father does his children and you accepted it not as the word of men, but as the word of God at work within you who believe."*

The **Gospel Reading** is from the ***Gospel of Matthew (23:1-12)***. In this passage, Jesus is making a stinging accusation against the Pharisees, the leaders of the people at that time, because of the way they acted by lording it over the people with rules they themselves did not keep and other manners of pride. Jesus is not telling the people to disobey, but rather, do not imitate either because the proud looks and haughty manner of the leaders is contemptible in the eyes of God. Jesus' teaching about calling someone "father" or "master" is confusing to many today. What He is saying in essence is, ***"Do not give your allegiance to someone until you see their sincerity and honesty."***

The message within all of these readings and, indeed, the entire Bible, is: Honesty and sincerity are the essential ingredients of a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ. That should make us want to examine our own spiritual standing with God and the Church. Something to think about during your prayer time this week! **MFB**