

Commentary on the Gospel for Fri, Jan 13th 2017

“Do not forget the works of the Lord!”

Psalm 78, from which today’s Responsorial Psalm and refrain are taken, sketches the life of God’s chosen people over many years and generations. Much of the psalm decries the faithlessness of the people while extolling the faithfulness of God. It’s a story of a constant back-and-forth between this people and their God. In the midst of this narrative of losing faith and regaining faith, repeated again and again, the psalm provides a diagnosis for the people’s wavering in faith. Why do they wander away? They wander because they forget what God has done in the past, they forget the “works of the Lord.” Hence the command: “Do not forget the works of the Lord!”

Pope Francis frequently speaks of the need to remember well, to be conscious of the Lord’s works in our own lives lest we repeat the mistakes of our wandering ancestors. This right remembering not only makes us right with God, but is a source of joy! In our own wanderings through this world, nothing can give us greater joy than to know the consoling presence of the Lord who walks by our side, faithful and loving, day in and day out.

How do we maintain this joy? By remembering past events when the Lord “came through for me” or when he gave me an assurance of his mercy. This generates hope in the present: “The Lord can do it again!” God is faithful, unchanging in his fidelity and in his mercy. What robs us of joy is forgetting ways in which we have seen and experienced this. Forgetting leads to darkness, doubt, restlessness, moving away from prayer and, ultimately, moving away from joy.

What “works of the Lord” am I being invited to remember today? What specific past events, graces and gifts from the Lord do I need to recall today to reinforce or re-establish my joy in the Lord?

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