

Commentary on the Gospel for Fri, Feb 3rd 2017

The recipients of the Letter to the Hebrews were folks who were flagging in their commitment to faith and the Christian life. The author addresses their lack of faith in the sacrifice and priesthood of Jesus. Hebrews has been the focus of the first readings in Ordinary Time since the ending of the Christmas season.

We all need to hear that message of the author because of our need to grow in faithfulness and love as we encounter the daily-ness of our lives. Let's look at just one of the features expressed in the first reading for today's liturgy.

The reading is from the last chapter of Hebrews, a kind of summary of how to live effectively with the will to follow Jesus and make that following effective in their everyday lives. The people are exhorted to live simply and to trust that "the Lord is my helper and I will not be afraid. What can anyone do to me?"

The virtues they are called to live out seem to be fundamental for living the Christ-life within them (and, clearly, within us): "do not neglect hospitality;" "be mindful of prisoners;" "let marriage be honored;" "let your life be free from love of money." How do these injunctions relate to us today?

This list seems doable; there's not a grand scheme here that we'd think of as way beyond what we might be called to accomplish. There's a simplicity here that is inviting for our growth as persons of faith and as members of the Body of Christ. We're not asked to convert vast numbers of our contemporaries, but only to be attentive to those around us.

Take "hospitality" for example. Can I be open to offering hospitality to those I meet? This sounds simple enough, but there's a lot more to it in the fast-paced world around us. It is so easy for me to refuse the person in need who approaches me and asks for a hand-out. Do I see Christ in that person? I have to conclude that I do not. With that said, I need to look to continued conversion in faith.

Multiply my little encounter and consider a more pressing issue of hospitality: the thousands who are fleeing from their homelands as refugees. Where is Christ in our response to these people? Can we even see Christ's or God's call to respond in faith, hope and love? What WOULD Jesus do?

Merciful God, help us to reflect your goodness, mercy and forgiveness in our present situations. Keep us faithful to your Word (in the Good News and in the very person of Jesus). Open us to your guidance and be with us as the very source of all life. Thank you for the opportunities to discover you in our daily lives and histories. Help us to know that YOU are the source of our freedom and that you call us to fearlessness in our living and serving with you. Thank you for approaching us and our often faltering commitment in faith

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