

Commentary on the Gospel for Tue, Feb 6th 2018

Memorial of Saint Paul Miki and Companions, Martyrs

Today's readings lead me to reflect on how over time early intentions may become lost in daily practices.

In the passage from the First Book of Kings, Solomon is dedicating the temple, a new and more splendid home for the holy objects. I find Solomon notable in his humility during this event. He does not deem himself to have the right to handle these objects. He recognizes God by stretching out his hands toward heaven in prayer showing his submission and openness. He asks for forgiveness.

I see the Responsorial Psalm as a spontaneous prayer of love of devotion and the Gospel Acclamation as emphasizing the basis of the tradition.

In today's Gospel, religious leaders from Jerusalem do not have the same sense of humility. They have seemingly made up their minds about Jesus. They appear to be out to discredit him. Jesus makes a distinction between that which is the basis of tradition and how the tradition has come to be practiced.

Today's readings bring to mind a number of similar situations my experience. Too often I feel what was envisioned is lost in either the rules or in the daily routine.

I feel that my best moments during my work career have been those where I was actively concerned about where I should be heading. These were the times when I was putting in more than could be expected because I was driven by a fire burning in my heart. As a teacher I was concerned about how students learn as well as why they were in my program. I worried about how I could contribute to building God's kingdom in a community of science students. I found amazing how much could be accomplished. Unfortunately, an individual only has so much energy to invest each day. Realities of human behavior (of the students, of my faculty colleagues and of myself) creep in. Things become institutionalized as they grow and people need to move on. The fire fades and things start to become routine.

I often think of my marriage as having parallels to my own spiritual life. There are moments of enthusiasm and acts of commitment. There are also dry spells where other aspects of my life distract from my relationship. These distractions take their toll both in the short term and in the long term. When I am doing things out of duty rather than the "basis of the tradition" founded in and prospering with the relationship, I am falling into the mold of the religious leaders in the Gospel.

I think of my university's mission and its policies. The mission is clear and noble. The policies are generally based on an individual having stepped out of bounds or even a fear of that happening. I realize that institutional emails generally seem to have policies rather mission as their focus. I often feel a disconnect between how the tradition is practiced and the basis of the tradition.

Today is the feast day of Saint Paul Miki and 25 other martyrs. My prayer today is for the kind of personal strength that was found in people like these who acted out their deep inner sense of what was truly important.

Heavenly Father,
I pray today for the strength to see and act on what is important.
Grant me forgiveness for the times when I have lost focus.
Assist me in distinguishing between how the tradition is practiced and the basis of the tradition.
Help me to avoid frustration with the rules and limitations that I encounter.
Do not allow the potential routine of life to interfere with how I respond to You.
The days may be long, and the tasks may be many.
When fatigue may blur my focus, I ask for Your guidance in how I live out my personal mission.

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