

Commentary on the Gospel for Wed, Feb 14th 2018

Who are we? We are children of God knit together by God in our mothers' wombs! Our goal on this planet is to become the person God dreamed us to be when God created us.

Paul presents the Christian ideal dramatically: "We are ambassadors for Christ" (2 Cor 5, 20)! Our journey in life is to reflect Christ's presence and so truly become Christ's ambassadors to the world. There is no more exalted vocation.

Lent is the season of the Church year when we are invited to look deeply within ourselves and ask how well we are living our identity as Christ's ambassadors. Jesus in today's Gospel invites us to be very specific in naming obstacles blocking us from reflecting this identity.

Jesus suggests we pay special attention to three areas: prayer, fasting, generosity (alms-giving). Perhaps most important is prayer. Are we in daily communion with Christ through prayer enabling Christ's presence to shine through us and so become his ambassador? Should we consider adjusting patterns of our daily routine to include daily prayer? Second, fasting. Are we over indulgent in patterns of consumption – eating and drinking -- in a way that obscures Christ's presence? Should these patterns be modified? Finally, generosity to others. Do we live selflessly? Are we living primarily for service of God and our neighbor or are our lives self-centered focused primarily on enhancing personal well being and reputation?

The ideal of becoming Christ's ambassador is overwhelming -- not to mention out of touch with our societal conditioning! But there is good news: God gives us the Holy Spirit! We become Christ's ambassadors to the degree we allow the Holy Spirit to transform our lives. Listen to Ps. 51: "A clean heart create for me, O God, and a steadfast spirit renew within me. Cast me not out from your presence and your Holy Spirit take not from me"(Ps 51:12-13).

Lent can become a joyful season for us if we open our hearts and allow the Spirit to transform our lives. In his Letter to the Galatians Paul reminds us that the fruits of the Spirit include joy -- love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control!

And so this season as we strive to become more fully Christ's ambassadors we also pray for a renewal of Christian joy in our lives: "Give me back the joy of your salvation and a willing spirit sustain within me" (Ps 51,14).

Happy Lent!

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