

Commentary on the Gospel for Thu, Jan 29th 2015

A recent reflection noted how the liturgy of the Christmas season is over and we are back to the Season of Ordinary Time. In one sense, returning to the ordinary, the everyday, captures the blah feeling we tend to experience during the post-holiday cold and gloom of January. At this time of year, getting through daily life can be tough. I even find myself struggling to write this reflection, and I am trying to generate enthusiasm for a new semester of teaching. From a liturgical standpoint, Easter seems far away, and we still have to get through Lent. . . .

Having said that, I find comfort in the familiar passages from this month's readings from Mark's gospel. I enjoy hearing the parables, even if I, like Jesus' disciples and those he was preaching to, don't fully understand them. I welcome the chance to further explore the good news, to nurture my faith so it will grow like some of the seeds mentioned in the accounts surrounding today's gospel.

I love the words and images that are used in this passage from Mark, words that appeal to several of the senses and imagery that resonates, evoking so many meanings and connecting so many ideas. Mark's gospel deals with the ministry and mystery of Jesus, and recent passages especially suggest how He, this word made flesh, is to be received. In the parable of the lamp, Christ is the beacon that must be brought out from under the bushel basket. He is the light of the world, whose life and words need to be revealed and proclaimed. The response psalm's refrain is "Lord, this is the people that long to see your face." We see and know God through Jesus, who is light giving—illuminating, guiding—and life giving—part of the triune God who is the source of all life.

The readings also point to our own actions, how we should live our faith. Like Christ, we must not hide our lamp under the basket or bed. Our lives and faith must serve as a light and exemplum for others. We are also called to hear the word and to act accordingly. We are reminded of the great command about love and reciprocity when Jesus says, "Take care what you hear. The measure with which you measure will be measured out to you." Likewise, in the letter to the Hebrews, we are urged to "rouse one another to love and good works" and to "encourage one another." This is accomplished in part by membership in a faith community and by gathering together: "We should not stay away from our assembly."

The reading from Mark ends with the following phrase: "To the one who has, more will be given; from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away." Where faith is concerned, more is more. I also think of the Jesuit charism of *magis*, which means "the more" or "the greater." Striving for greater things, giving one's best, doing the utmost--this is how we grow in faith, love, and community. And by growing the kingdom of God on earth, we can look forward to the time when we see His face in eternity.

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