

Commentary on the Gospel for Sat, Feb 21st 2015

Today's readings are rich and powerful. Please take a moment to re-read and ask God to give you something from the readings that speaks to you to meditate with. This might already be a practice of yours, but it is something I have been working on in order to deepen my relationship with God. For today's readings, I found myself struggling with the passage that spoke to me. I will share with you my struggles in the hopes that we might all grow:

“The Pharisees and their scribes complained to his disciples, saying,

“Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?” (Luke 5:30)

The way I understand the religious leaders known as the Pharisees is that they had become so preoccupied with keeping the law; they oftentimes missed out on opportunities to help those that needed help. My struggle is that I have had a heightened sense of my own “Pharisee-ism” which I believe is a certain type of “sickness.” A side effect of “Pharisee-ism” is an unhealthy attitude towards people who are not like us. We don't think we can eat and drink with them and we disassociate ourselves from them. Today's readings in Isaiah are packed with reasons why it is healthy to avoid “Pharisee-ism.” If we develop a better attitude towards removing oppression, making false accusations and speaking maliciously, the light will rise for us in the darkness and God will renew our strength. That's a wonderful promise!

Now that Lent is in full swing, I have decided to work towards “giving up” an unhealthy attitude of “Pharisee-ism.” I have asked for God's help especially in those areas when it isn't even obvious to me that I am acting in a “Pharisee-ism” manner. I believe that many of us (me included) are just simply unaware of our own “Pharisee-ism.”

This Lent on the Creighton campus we are reading a book written by Matt Holland called “Ahead of Their Time: The Story of the Omaha DePorres Club”. Mr. Holland's father was the student leader of the DePorres Club here in Omaha many years before the Civil Rights movement. Mr. Holland spoke on campus recently and I learned that Omaha in the 1940's and 1950's was sometimes called the “Birmingham of the North.” Ouch! I realized how important and essential it is for people to nudge the “Pharisee-ism” conscious and speak out against oppression. Several years later, the DePorres Club continues with its mission through their story. My “Pharisee-ism” conscious has been nudged. Thank you God for the DePorres Club!

I struggle with the areas in my life where there is oppression, false accusations and malicious speech that I am aware of and that I am not aware of. This Lenten journey, as I seek to “give up” “Pharisee-ism,” I have the sense I am going to learn some things about myself that I am not proud of. I have felt the nudge that it is a journey I need to take. I invite those of you who may have also felt the nudge while reading today’s readings and/or this reflection to pray with what God gives you.

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