

Commentary on the Gospel for Mon, May 11th 2015

The readings for focus on the apostles – both their preparation for their evangelizing and actual accounts of those journeys. The paradox is that our first reading tells of the journeys of Paul as revealed in the Acts and the Gospel is about Jesus readying them for what's ahead as told in the gospel of John.

The first reading shares the story of the Paul in Philippi where he encounters Lydia. The story of Lydia – the woman who sold purple cloth – is a beautiful one. It reflects a woman who greets the experience with an open heart and unfailing faith. Somewhere I read her described as being in the right place at the right time with the right attitude and right heart. Lydia has been compared to Rahab of the Old Testament (who hid Caleb in Jericho) – another woman of faith who followed her heart and was saved. When I read of these women and their unwavering faith I must ask myself – what would I have done in their situations? Could I act with such faith? Could I be that courageous? Would I surrender my will to that of God with hesitation? Then I must also ask about my actions and reactions now. What do I do in my daily life – how do I face these current day-to-day challenges? I believe that my faith is the very foundation of my existence – I can't imagine a moment with God as my redeemer. Yet, do my actions always show that? Is it evident to others – am I a reflection of that deep belief – am I easily recognized as a grateful child of God?

Our responsorial psalm reminds us of God's love for us. How like the loving parent, He delights in us. It becomes our opportunity to behave in ways that continues that delight. While there is no doubt that we are forgiven our shortcomings, we still strive to be the child that brings delight not heartache. Who of us does not take joy in seeing the delight of others at our actions – perhaps in the simplest ways? The smile of another as we open a door or assist them with a heavy burden (physically or symbolically) – the delight in the gift of a single flower or pointing out a falling star. Our Father delights in us and we, in turn, sings praises and show gratitude for the beauty that surrounds us.

The Gospel precedes the stories of the reading. In the Gospel Jesus tells of the coming of the Advocate – He is preparing them for the challenges ahead but also letting them know they are not alone. There will be strength and truth through this Advocate – a true grace that will be with them always. It will not be an easy road ahead for the disciples. They will be expelled and persecuted yet they will do it with courage and the companionship of each other fortified by the Holy Spirit. I'm sure as they were first hearing this it did not make much sense but as the Gospel says they will remember what Jesus told them. Even today throughout the world we see evidence of those who believe in Christ being persecuted. We may not always comprehend the gravity of those challenges from our vantage point in a country of religious freedom. It is critical for us to pray for the disciples of today who preach the word of the Gospel at great peril to themselves. It is equally critical that I “preach” the word and teachings of Christ through my actions and behaviors. I love the quote from St. Francis of Assisi:

Preach the Gospel at all times and when necessary use words . . .

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