

Commentary on the Gospel for Wed, Oct 26th 2016

Our first two readings for today emphasize our need for obedience to our parents and “masters” as well as believing in the faithfulness of our Lord. The gospel warns us that there will be wailing and the gnashing of teeth for the many unable to enter the kingdom of heaven.

The first reading starts with a directive to obey and honor our parents. This is certainly a familiar statement to all of us and one that most would agree is appropriate. An interesting perspective to me was the statement about fathers not provoking their children to anger. My first read on it was thinking about keeping children happy which didn't seem to make much sense. Then as I pondered the second line about instruction in the ways of the Lord, I thought of it as more to not bring them up with anger and bitterness but rather loving and kind in interactions with others reflecting that they, indeed, follow the Lord. While I was not totally comfortable with the next part about slaves and masters, I put it into the perspective congruent with what Jesus said much later, render to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's. So, no matter who we “serve” on earth, we should always serve the Lord in all we do. I think even now as we work at our various jobs and careers, we can always first serve the Lord in our actions and attitudes and keep that as a centering focus.

The responsorial psalm emphasizes faithfulness in all ways. This is easy enough to embrace. The challenge is learning to live with God's time. While I have no doubt in God's love for us and that the end results will be what is right, I frequently struggle with the here and now. The actions of some that are so hurtful to others, decisions that are made that affect the innocent, the situations that leave such pain. I struggled this week with grief for someone I loved as she endured a miscarriage. I prayed over and over again, “thy will be done.” I know that God's plan is greater than I can ever understand but the immediate pain is real. I did take great comfort in some scripture that was “the encouraging word of the day” during this ordeal that reiterated the faith and love of God for us. I even forwarded that on to her and she responded, “Amen.” So I knew her faith was remaining strong and would see her through this disappointment. I know that the love of God is greater than anything I can imagine but the tears still flow. . . .

The gospel reading did not offer immediate comfort to me but lead to uneasiness and doubt. Will the door be locked to me? Who will be left on the outside? This uneasiness was with me for a few days until I attended one of the most beautiful masses ever. We are on vacation and were in a church we attended in the past when visiting here. We knew it was a place of great faith. It touched my heart in a very direct way – as we sang the entry song about building a City of God, a dozen or so ladies (part of the Altar and Rosary Society of this church) proceeded down the aisle. All dressed in lovely white dresses – mostly simple muumuu styles many with blue leis on their necks. The presence of the Holy Spirit was palpable to me – my eyes welled with tears, my skin had goose flesh – it was powerful!

Every song, every word continued in this same fashion throughout the mass. The homily drew us in to the presence of something greater than us. At the end of mass, another beautiful group of women did a reverent hula dance honoring God. They announced that they also performed this in Rome when Father Damien and Sister Marianne were each canonized as saints. All in all, this was a very moving experience that washed away my uneasiness and replaced it with a solid feeling of faith and love.

