

## **Commentary on the Gospel for Wed, Aug 30th 2017**

Today's readings invite us to examine how we act. They are clear and descriptive and pretty intense!

The beginning of the school year is upon us here in the Midwest United States. Perhaps because I work with a program here at Creighton that forms new Catholic school teachers, and perhaps because the air is abuzz with the beginning of the school year around here, but looking at these readings with the backdrop of the teaching profession seems to bring them to life in a new way for me.

Paul is reminding the Thessalonians about the ways in which he shared good news with them. Not just dictating or commanding, but really putting in the effort, lovingly and patiently modeling the Word of God... "we treated each one of you as a father treats his children, exhorting and encouraging you and insisting that you walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into his Kingdom and glory."

Wow! How moving and inspiring and encouraging! He is not just telling this new group of Christians how to live or how God is, but rather he is laboring with, alongside them, showing care, concern and mercy. He writes about "how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved toward you believers."

Paul reminds them that the Word of God is actually at work in "you who believe."

I invite us to picture a phenomenal classroom teacher saying this to a group of students that he or she has taught. Perhaps the image is even of an actual teacher whom we have had in our own schooling.

Isn't this description that Paul gives describing what an amazing teacher does? Saint Ignatius of Loyola wrote about how he felt like God was treating him like a schoolmaster teaches a student, lovingly and patiently guiding him, not that far off from what Paul is describing here.

This first reading also beautifully demonstrates St. Ignatius' famous line that "love ought to manifest itself in deeds rather than words" from the Spiritual Exercises.

The description in Paul's letter in the first reading is the opposite of the legalistic scribes and Pharisees that Jesus is condemning, "which appear beautiful on the outside, but inside...are filled with hypocrisy and evildoing." Yikes! We can imagine what that looks like.

I invite us to pray today for a way to model Paul in his ministry to the Thessalonians, using the description of the First Reading as our guide. May we "walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls [us] into his Kingdom and glory" and through our actions, encourage others to do the same.

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