

Commentary on the Gospel for Sat, Nov 25th 2017

Today I see both the Old Testament and New Testament readings showing the challenges brought about by faithfulness and the hope for overcoming these challenges. The passage from the First Book of the Maccabees has a leader, Antiochus, who is dying in disgrace after challenging the Chosen People and their faith. The Gospel has Jesus responding to the Sadducees on a question which was meant to trap Jesus rather than enlighten.

There is also a historical connection between the two readings. Antiochus had actively undermined the practice of the Jewish faith and in this way fostered the growth of rebel groups like the Maccabees. The success of the rebellion would lead to a hundred years of Maccabean rule. The Romans would eventually reassert control over the region. My feeling is that the tenuous relationship between the Jewish leadership and the Romans would lead to the issues related to institutionalization and corruption against which Jesus would speak. In this setting, the Sadducees, with their role and status within the Jewish community, could easily be at odds with Jesus and his message.

I can see the that exchanges between Jesus and the Sadducees would be strained at the very least. My feeling is that Jesus was set to experience the same type of strained conversations that some families faced when a discussion of the current social and political environment found its way to the Thanksgiving dinner table. (This past Thursday was Thanksgiving Day in the U.S.)

Antiochus makes his life worse by his decrees. The apprehensive Sadducees actively try to discredit Jesus. What do I draw from this today? My mission on this earth is not to impose my viewpoint, no matter how smart I may think that I may be at a particular moment. I can remember a day some years ago when after pushing that things be done my way, my wife told me that I could be a difficult person. I did not take this lightly and called my sisters telling them what had happened. To my surprise they agreed with my wife. I phoned my best friend who also sided with my spouse. The rule of Antiochus and the Sadducees' desire to trap rather than understand can provide lessons.

Dear Lord,

Help me to remember that I am called to humble service.

Assist me in not falling into the trap of feeling that I am right and if those around me could only understand they would come to see that I am right.

Give me the resolution to listen and to learn.

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