

## Commentary on the Gospel for Wed, Sep 5th 2018

Today's readings begin with a frank discourse from the Apostle Paul. While he begins with terms of endearment, "brothers and sisters," Paul does not spare them from the blunt expression of the truth. You are acting like babies! Grow up!

Babies have a powerful magnetism, and my grandchildren are the source of endless delights. We easily overlook weaknesses and immaturity and marvel at their small steps of progress, knowing that they are part of their journey toward maturity. Let us hope that God holds the same attitude toward us!

Paul's message expresses another important truth about the humility we share as God's workers. We may plant and water, but we are not the authors of the growth that leads to maturity. I note that so much work happens behind the scenes, undetected and quiet, without accolades or attention. Do you know some of those workers? Chances are, your mother and father are among them, along with many others who serve and do kindnesses that remain hidden to us, but which are not hidden to God. Remember them with a prayer of gratitude.

Today's gospel reflects the story of one of those behind-the-scenes workers, Simon's mother-in-law. When she is stricken with illness, Jesus delivers healing through his word. Her response is simple and profound – she returns to what, presumably, she had been doing before – preparing food and serving those around her. Isn't that a sure sign of the completeness of her healing? Aren't we blessed to know people like this, who orient their lives toward doing what is needful, without calling attention to themselves? This is surely a sign of maturity that we would do well to emulate.

When words fail, food and hospitality may yet succeed. I had a relative who had become distant from the rest of the family. When her mother passed, I did not know what to say. I avoided the situation because I lacked the words to say. But my mother and sister just made some food and went to visit, reducing the distance and breaking down barriers. While they are also able to show compassion and gratitude through words, they are savvy enough to understand that other means are sometimes needed. This is an embodiment of wisdom and maturity that comes from experience. We can learn much from such people.

Lord, let us have gratitude for the people who water, plant, and sometimes weed the garden in which we are growing. And let us learn from those people who serve so well, so that we can cooperate with you and join them in your work. Thanks be to God.

Edward Morse-Creighton University's Law School