

Homily for November 03, 2019

The thirty-first Sunday of ordinary time

Readings

First reading: Wisdom 11:22-12:02

Second reading: 2 Thessalonians 1:11-2:02

Gospel: Luke 19: 1-10

I think we can slow down on praying for rain at this point. The seasonal change is very obvious this weekend. Get the heaters out and turned on; the blankets out and on the beds. Old man winter is on his way. Remember to check on the elderly family members or widows to make sure they have enough heat to keep them from getting sick.

Today's readings are meant to have us start to get ready for the holiday season that is quickly approaching. If we listen closely we will get that message. If you are familiar with Lectio Divina this is real clear. There are four steps in Lectio Divina; read, reflection, prayer, and contemplation. This is an old way of seeing scripture as a living word. Let me give you some of my reflections on today's readings.

I the first reading we hear "you rebuke offenders little by little, warn them and remind them of their sins they are committing that they may abandon their wickedness." This is God telling us to repent of our sins while there is still time to do so. None of us know how much time we have left. But from the season we know that "something is approaching". We all anticipate the coming of Christmas the stores will put that in our faces for better or worse. As a child after All Saints Day, Christmas became the focus of the next holiday. But it was still far enough to make sure you behaved well to be rewarded on Christmas Day with presents.

In the second reading what jumps out to me is the phrase "not to be shaken out of your minds suddenly, or to be alarmed either in spirit, or by an oral

statement, or by written letter to the effect that the day of the Lord is at hand.” This is telling me that we should be calm and reasonable in our anticipation of the Lord’s coming. How many people get obsessed with the second coming? We can see all the books written about the end of the world, or hidden passages that tell us when Jesus will return? If we combine these two readings it is reassurance that we have to get ready for the Lord’s coming, but to get ready in a reasonable fashion. We need to focus on getting ourselves ready, for Christ’s coming. Don’t get lost in the less important things. The holiday season for many, becomes a great cause of distress, depression, and anxiety, instead of happiness, closeness, and joy.

The gospel becomes an image of ourselves. The most unfit character Zacchaeus is at the center. Physically short, rich by extortion, traitorous to his countryman is anxious to see this talked about healing preacher. Jesus stops, calls him by name and invites himself into his house. By this encounter he is instantly repentant and changes his ways. Did he follow through? He must have or he would not be mentioned in this story. Would we react like he did?

When we expect guests coming to our house we prepare by cleaning, shopping, and cooking. We want to make a good impression. It would tickle me that my parents would straighten up for the cleaning lady who came once a week. But this is someone special, a celebrity asking to come over. Ask yourself, are you ready for Jesus to come into your home? What things need to get cleaned up and put away? Will we clean up the things in our life so that Jesus can come into it, and make a home within us? If we analyze Zacchaeus, he makes extreme repentance, instead of repaying ill gotten gains with expected 20% interest he offers 400-500 percent interest. Instead of giving 20% tithe which would have been a sign of true repentance he gives 50%. Where did he suddenly get his generosity? He got it from the one who called him down from the tree. He raised himself higher by his own determination to see the face of God, but he had to lower himself back down so the Son of God could raise him up. We must humble ourselves as well so that Jesus can raise us up according to His design. Then we can truly meaningfully say what we acclaim at every Mass; “Lord I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.