

Thirty first Sunday of Ordinary Time

Malachi 1.14-2.2, 8-10, 1Thessalonians 2.7-9, 13, Mt. 23.1-12

Today's readings can be summed up by saying, practice what you preach and be humble. In the Gospel reading Jesus compliments the ability and quality of the teachings of the scribes and Pharisees. But Jesus follows up by stating that "they preach but they do not practice." Jesus charges the scribes and Pharisees with hypocrisy and infidelity to their own religious heritage. The Pharisees were great teachers of the law. There was one problem, however: many of the Pharisees did not practice what they preached. The Pharisees bound up the people with many laws and wanted their disciples and students to practice all of the laws, but they did not always follow the laws themselves.

This passage serves as a warning to us all to practice what we preach, especially when we are preaching God's word. In the simple things of life, we may invoke God's example. The old bracelets what would Jesus do? If I reference this in the case of a talk about helping my neighbor yet I do not practice this myself, how can I proclaim this reference with a straight face.

The reference to the scribes and Pharisees "have taken their seat on the chair of Moses." Many Pharisees as well as us like to sit places of honor and receive attention. Jesus is calling us to be humble. According to the Catholic dictionary, to be humble or to have humility is having the moral virtue that keeps a person from reaching beyond himself. It is the virtue that restrains the unruly desire for personal greatness.

We are all called to utilize the virtue of humility. We do this by recognizing our role is to serve our neighbor, not to be served. We are to help without seeking the attention or recognition of a higher place or position. By cultivating inner humility and trusting in God is like the earlier call of Jesus to "become like children" (MT. 18.4).

We are the beloved of God, and as the beloved of God, we also need to live by God's law of love. We are to care for our neighbor and all people who are in need (even if we may not like them). Today is a good day for us to be aware of our personal motivations. Why do we do what we do? Is it so others will think highly of us? Is it because we simply care about people and desire to help them as best we can?

This past week we have celebrated All Saints Day. Let us look at St. Martin de Porres as an example for humility. St. Martin was from Lima Peru where he studied medicine as a boy and later joined the Dominican Order. I would like to

share from the Homily of his Canonization by Pope John XXIII. “The example of Martin’s life is ample evidence that we can strive for holiness and salvation as Christ Jesus has shown us: first by loving God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind; and second by loving your neighbor as yourself. St Martin loved men because he honestly looked on them as his brothers and sisters. Such was his humility that he loved them even more than himself and considered them to be better and more righteous than he was. He did not blame others for his shortcomings. He was tireless in his efforts to reform the criminal and would sit up with the sick to bring them comfort. For the poor he would provide food, clothing, and medicine. The common people called him “Martin the charitable.”

Now let’s do a quick comparison of what the scribes and Pharisees did. They preached and taught well but they did not practice what they preached. They preferred to be recognized for their position. The chair of Moses is a reference to someone in high authority. Yet it is St. Martin who lives the life humbleness that demonstrates the true love of God. St Martin is only one of many Saints we could turn to for an example. It just happens His feast day was Nov. 3.

My friends we need to pray for the virtue of Humility. Humility is the best way to combat pride. Let us speak and act the way Jesus directs us. Let us pick up our Bibles and study the revelations in which Jesus leads us to be humble. But most of all with an open heart and mind, let us make a good confession and allow Jesus to abide in us so through our humility we may grow in love of God, that we may be like children in faith, hope and love. That we, like St. Martin may love God with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our mind. That we may also love our neighbor as ourselves. May St Martin intercede for us.