

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The readings this Sunday point us towards a new order of things in salvation history; when the old order will give way to the fulfillment of the promise of “a new heaven and a new earth.” This joyful anticipation invites us to orient ourselves to a new way of being which prepares us for the coming of Christ into the world. Next Sunday we will celebrate the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe and the following Sunday we will celebrate the beginning of the Advent season. So, this is in a very real sense a time of expectation and joyful waiting. The Scriptures help us to conform ourselves to being active participants in the unfolding drama of salvation history.

In the first reading, the prophet Malachi seeks to point the people of Israel away from their behavior which is contrary to being in a right relationship with God. He is a herald and prophetic voice foretelling that change is coming into the world. Malachi challenges the Israelites to turn from pride and sinful behavior. Their self-absorption and self-centeredness will cause them to fall (“pride before the fall”). Conversely, those who live in humility and reliance upon God will experience the consolation of the “sun of justice with its healing rays.” A foundational aspect of this turning to God is perseverance. There is the temptation to be restless and become distracted and allured by things that bring easy comfort and satisfaction. Most especially in our culture of instant gratification, having to “wait in joyful hope” can seem a daunting task. All the more reason why a disposition of humility is so important in being patient as God reveals His plan of salvation to us.

St. Paul continues this motif of conforming ourselves to the justice of Jesus Christ in his letter to the Thessalonians. He speaks of the weaknesses and challenges of this Christian community, including gossip, being disorderly, and not contributing to the welfare of the whole community. Paul speaks of one aspect of the true nature of Christian work and service: to be models of generosity and edification for others. Like Malachi before him, Paul encourages his companions in charity to reform and have a conversion of heart so as to be conformed to the heart of Jesus. This manifests itself in being respectful of others, working hard and contributing as best as one can for the building up of the Kingdom in our midst.

The late Carl G. Howie, in his book God in the Eternal Present, wrote: “Meet God not someday far away; meet Him from day to day as He is an active agent in renewing life and directing it. Meet Him as He interprets success and failure. Meet Him as He rebukes and as He encourages you. Meet God in simple service and kind helpfulness. Meet God as you become a part of His purpose for all people. Meet God here and now in submission and in service. Thus, meeting Him you can never be separated from Him.” These are simple yet powerfully instructive words for us as we seek to live a more genuine and authentic Christian life.

Luke’s Gospel is also referred to as the “eschatological discourse”; that is, Jesus speaking of the end times. The three elements of this discourse include the destruction of Jerusalem; the end times; and the second coming of Jesus Christ. Jesus counsels his disciples to persevere with patience and prayer and to be willing to suffer trials for the sake of following him. He urges them to trust him; they don’t have to construct a defense for themselves, but Jesus will reveal to them the truth and wisdom to fortify themselves against the attacks of others.

The Navarre Bible offers this cogent reflection that helps to put into perspective for us the true nature of Christian witness: “Persecution provides Christians with an opportunity to bear witness to Christ; without it the blood of the martyrs would not adorn the Church. Moreover, our Lord promises to give special help to those who suffer persecution, and he tells them not to be afraid: he will give them of his own wisdom to enable them to defend themselves; he will not permit a hair of their heads to perish, that is, even apparent misfortune and loss will be for them a beginning of heaven.” These are words of hope and consolation. May they fortify us on our pilgrim’s journey towards the new and eternal Jerusalem!

One of our young parishioners, Blake McNally, will be speaking at our Masses this weekend about a very worthwhile project. Blake, who is homeschooled, is a senior working with other Catholic homeschooled youth on a service project in support of women and men serving in the military. Blake’s group, The Leadership Club, is joining with Soldier’s Angels (a non-profit organization which supports military personnel, their families, veterans, wounded soldiers and chaplains). The Leadership Club will be sending care packages through the Chaplain Support Program. I want to thank Blake and The Leadership Club for desiring to do something for others! If you are interested in supporting this effort, please contact Blake’s mother LisaMarie at [lmlombardi1220@hotmail.com](mailto:lmlombardi1220@hotmail.com)

Fr. Tom