



CALIFORNIA CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

Homily Helps

2023

Homily Helps

November 5, 2023 – 31st Sunday in Ordinary Time

Mal 1:14b-2:2b, 8-10

1. The prophet denounces those priests who in their pride have turned away from the Law, causing others to go astray
2. Malachi reminds us that we're all flawed, even priests and deacons. Who are we to judge others who may be in prison or otherwise rejected by society? As the final verse of this reading tells us, "we profane the covenant of our fathers by breaking faith with one another."

Ps 131:1-3

1. All are called to greatness through humility and service

1 Thes 2:7b-9, 13

1. All are called to greatness through sharing their lives with others

Mt 23:1-12 (Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; whoever humbles himself will be exalted)

1. Jesus denounces those priests who in their pride have turned away from the Law, causing others to go astray
2. Theme – a) All are called to minister to the needs of others – to crime victims, to prisoners, to correctional and law enforcement personnel; b) Our ministry to others must be authentic c) God [and those responsible for ministries] doesn't call the "qualified"; God qualifies the called – that is, we are all wounded healers, striving to serve a little better every day. Our desire for "the best" should never negate our efforts to contribute that which is merely "good" or merely "better" while waiting to be "best". Sometimes we have to live our lives contributing as a "caterpillar" before metamorphize into butterflies. . . . Being humble should never prevent us from being active. . .
1. Malachi and Jesus both say it is wrong and morally corrupt to use God's law for self-justification or to condemn others. That's what they're accusing the temple leaders of their time of doing: burdening or harming others, instead of serving God and others.
2. In the Gospel, Jesus reminds us that "all of you are brothers", and no person is greater than another.

Homily Helps

November 12, 2023 – 32nd Sunday in Ordinary Time

Wis 6:12-16

1. We should seek the Lord's wisdom

Ps 63:2-8

We seek many things in life, but we should seek first the Lord

1 Thes 4:13-18 [or] 4:13-14

1. We await the Lord's return in glory
2. We must encourage each other as we wait in hope for Christ's return

Mt 25:1-13 (The Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins)

1. Seek the Lord and His wisdom as a Vigil for the Lord
2. Theme – We must never tire of doing “right” [See: 2 Thes 3:13]
3. Theme – There are many obstacles to ministry. How can we, as ministers to others, replenish our oil? How do we renew our resiliency? a) An example – there is often a significant time lag between beginning the process of being cleared to minister in a jail or prison and actually starting ministry. How can we keep up our enthusiasm during the wait?
4. Jesus tells us to watch and be ready. Not to think about doing something good in the future, but to be ready now. We may have great intentions of ministering to crime victims or to inmates, or of calling our siblings we haven't spoken to in a while, or of visiting the friend who 's been sick. But intentions don't count. We're called to ACT. Now!

Homily Helps

November 19, 2023 – 33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time

Prv 31:10-13, 19-20, 30-31

1. Those who use their gifts and talents for the poor and needy are blessed indeed

Ps 126:1-5

1. Blessed are all who fear the LORD, and who walk in his ways

1 Thes 5:1-6

1. Those who use their gifts and talents in the service of one another will be ready for the Lord's return
2. These last few weeks we've heard parables about waiting and preparing for the Lord's coming. Here Paul reassures us that we will not be overcome if we spend our time wisely, doing the work of Christ.

Mt 25:14-30 [or] 25:14-15, 19-21 (The Parable of the Talents)

1. Those who use their gifts and talents in the service of one another, especially the poor and needy, are blessed indeed
2. Theme – economic justice as an underpinning (root) of restorative justice [See: Pope Francis – Misericordia et Misera, 20 Nov 2016]
3. Theme – There is a great need for people willing to give of their resources (especially time and talent) to minister to those impacted by crime
4. The servant who did not invest his master's money is the one who gets our attention. He went against his master's (God's, in the parable sense) instructions, and was punished for it. God demands that we use what gifts we have to serve him and his people.

Homily Helps

November 26, 2023 – Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe

Ez 34:11-12, 15-17

1. God will judge between sheep and between rams and goats

Ps 23:1-3, 5-6

1. The Lord is Our Shepherd

1 Cor 15:20-26, 28

1. At His coming, He will hand over the kingdom to His Father

Mt 25:31-46 (The Judgment of the Nations)

1. Nations (and humans) will be judged and divided between those who lived lives for others and those who have lived for themselves
2. Theme: I was in prison, and you visited me. This could also be rephrased as my dad was in prison . . . I was a victim of crime [See the Good Samaritan] . . .
3. This is probably the clearest statement in all of Scripture about Jesus's call to serve others. The other readings today all support the Gospel (that doesn't happen often). His list of ways to offer mercy isn't meant to limit our opportunities – it implies that there are limitless ways to help the people around us, and it's our mission to offer whatever we can to everyone we encounter.
 - a. We're called to "search out" the least among us, and so fully identify with the stranger, the hungry, and the incarcerated. Pope Francis sends us "to the outskirts" of society.
 - b. Don't overlook the fact that as part of his passion, Jesus was jailed, abused, and humiliated before his execution. He's an excellent proxy for incarcerated men and women, and understands their suffering in a very real and human sense.
 - c. As Fr. Greg Boyle likes to remind us, when we stand on the margins the margins disappear. When we go to the Other, the Other ceases to be "Other".
 - d. Sometimes people ask, "Why should I make a special effort to serve sinners?" They conveniently forget that they're sinners too!
4. The background of this Gospel story is about judgments between nations. It builds on the Prophetic writings (Ezekiel, Ezra, Enoch, Joel, Baruch) that say nations will be judged based on the treatment of Israel. Matthew makes it more personal, about individuals instead of faceless states. He's speaking of Gentiles vs. Jews, but that can easily be extended to later Christians and how they treat others (Jewish or otherwise).