

Homily For Tuesday of the 21st Week of Ordinary Time - Year II

St Peter's 8:30am Mass - August 23, 2022

2 Thess 2:1-3,14-17 "Do not be shaken or alarmed as if the day of the Lord is already here."

Psalm 96:10-13 "He is coming to judge the earth, and will judge the peoples with his truth."

Matt 23:23-26 "Woe to you hypocrites and blind guides who have neglected justice, mercy and faith. "

The Weightier Matters of the Law

Introduction

I bought a portable power saw at one time. The manual indicated some important things about safety that were obvious. But I was amused by this one instruction. It said, Do not stand on your saw. Well, I had never thought about doing such a thing and I don't know if anyone else would have. But there it was. Undeniable as a good idea. Don't stand on it. Good to know.

The bible is sometimes seen as a manual for living. At one time, it was relevant to consider what the bible had to say about an issue facing modern culture. A few years ago, I noticed how much the cultural attitude towards the Bible had changed. It was a standard radio talk show discussing some issue of morality in society which I don't remember. A caller came on ranting about what it says in the Bible. The reaction of the host, and other callers struck me with the reality that, while at one time we could have argued societal values from the bible, that time was over. The public discourse was no longer interested in what the bible had to say. In fact, the bible as source of truth was ridiculed as not keeping up with the times, unscientific, and downright irrelevant.

That's our world. You and I live in it. But we can live in it without becoming a part of it. We can hold to the truth about God and still go about the daily business of making our way in the world. In fact, that's really our main task as Christians.

One of the things I have done, I started a few years ago. I began to refer the Bible more frequently as Sacred Scripture. Bible is a generic term. It just means a library of books. But Sacred Scripture is God's love letter, the story of God's plan of salvation for the world.

Today's passages from Sacred Scripture present such a rich array of truths, that I couldn't decide which one or two to focus on. So I am just going to do my version of a highlight package.

Matthew

It never hurts to start with Jesus. We sometimes call Sacred Scripture, The Word of God. But Sacred Scripture tells us that it is only part of the Word of God. Jesus himself is more than Sacred Scripture. He is the one who the story of salvation is pointing to. So, he is the complete Word of God. But, you might say that everything Jesus said and did is in Sacred Scripture. But John's Gospel tells us that this is not true. The last verse says: "There are also many other things which Jesus did. Were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written."

This is exactly why Jesus established a Church which, always inspired by the Holy Spirit, is able to slowly develop a deeper and deeper understanding of the meaning of God's plan. That is what we call 'T' Tradition. It's not little things that we add to religious practice. It's the fuller explanation of the truth. But Jesus Christ is the Truth. That's what he says.

When Jesus accuses the Pharisees of straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel, he is explaining that there are little things and big things. Don't do the little things, the little traditions, and leave out the big things, the big Tradition. Gnats and camels are both considered unclean for eating. So they would make sure the little insects were strained out of the wine so as not to accidentally eat them. But Jesus uses this great image of swallowing a camel instead to say that you mustn't do that little thing but forget about being just and merciful, about depth of faith in God. Stop pretending to be faithful, like cleaning the outside of the cup that everyone can see, and do the bigger things - clean the inside where your heart is.

Psalms

Today's psalm is Sacred Scripture telling us that all creation is made by God and reflects God's glory. It sings. The reason we care about the planet is because God

put his own divine spark into it. The sea roars and the fields exult. All creation will sing.

2 Thessalonians

St Paul is dealing with the anxiety of the Thessalonian Church. Someone said to them that Christ had already returned. They were anxious about this because they were still suffering under persecution. Paul sternly reminds them to hold fast to what they were taught, both by letter and by word of mouth. So, not everything is written down. It comes to us in Sacred Scripture but it also comes to us through authoritative teaching by the Church. Don't be anxious. God is with us in all these ways. Stand firm. Jesus will return in glory. Don't be upset or deceived. You are Christians. We want the Lord to come. If we possess the grace of being in Christ, we will not be shaken, even if the rest of the world loses its peace. Hold fast to the Apostolic tradition, orally or in writing. Be encouraged and let the truth of the Good News live in your hearts.

Call To Action

Let us stand firm on three pillars. We have Sacred Scripture, which is the written word of God. It points to the coming of the Messiah and tells us about his birth, life, death and resurrection. We have capital T Tradition, which is the teachings of the Church Christ founded. It gives us the sacraments, the presence of Christ. We have the magisterium, Christ's own authority to determine the truths that God wants us to know. Stand firm. Do not be afraid. God is with us.

Key Passages

Entrance Antiphon: *O Lord, I trust in your merciful love. My heart will rejoice in your salvation.*

Collect: *We pray, almighty God, that always pondering spiritual things, we may carry out in both word and deed that which is pleasing to you.*

2 Thess 2: *We beg you not to be shaken or alarmed as though the day of the Lord is already here. Let no one deceive you. God called you through our proclamation of the good news ... Hold fast to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by word of mouth or by our letter. Now may our Lord Jesus Christ and God our Father ... comfort your hearts and strengthen them in every good word and word.*

Psalm 96: *He is coming to judge the earth. He will judge the world with righteousness and the peoples with his truth.*

Matthew 23: *Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint, dill and cummin, and have neglected justice mercy and faith ... You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel. Woe to you ... for you clean the outside of the cup, but inside it is full of greed and self indulgence. First clean the inside of the cup, so that the outside also may become clean.*