

September 15, 2018 24th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Migrant Camp Mass at Sts. Cyril & Methodius, Wayland

Before Mass:

Welcome to one and all as we gather together on this beautiful Saturday evening to celebrate God's Presence among us!

Welcome in a special way to Father Andrew, Deacon Alberto, and to our dear Sisters, along with our Diocesan Director, Veronica Rodriguez_

In a special way, we thank Father Alphonse, and the people of Sts. Cyril and Methodius Parish for your hospitality.

Let us prepare ourselves to celebrate these Sacred Mysteries by calling to mind our sins.

Homily:

It's really hard to believe that the first half of September is already gone, and the Fall season is just about to officially begin. Harvests of various crops have taken place, and harvests of other crops continue to take place, and it's just about time to pick pumpkins for all the upcoming Fall activities. And I'm sure that the children in particular are more excited as Halloween preparations are underway in earnest. The reality of the change of seasons, and the impact it has on our daily schedules is part of the ongoing "reality" of our lives.

Our Scripture Readings for today's Mass on this 24th Sunday in Ordinary Time give us a great deal to think about regarding the "reality" of our lives and the world around us. While "reality" for us living here in southwest Michigan in the late-summer/early-Fall of 2018 is different than that of those who live in a different part of the world, or who lived at different times in history, there is a kind of "universal reality" that all people, at all times in history, share in: the struggle to know the difference between right and wrong; the challenging questions about good versus evil; how to make decisions about matters of life and death.

Since the very beginning of “Time”, when God first revealed Himself through the Scriptures, God’s purpose was always to help us to know Him and to embrace His Love for us and all humanity.

That’s what we heard in today’s First Reading as the Prophet Isaiah said very simply: *“The Lord God opens my ear that I may hear...the Lord God is my help.”* The key word there is “may”----*“The Lord God opens my ear that I MAY hear.”* God never forces Himself upon us; God always leaves it up to us whether we CHOOSE to “hear” what He has to say, or whether we decide to “tune Him out”. It’s up to us---it’s always up to us!

In today’s Gospel Reading, St. Mark let us “listen in” on a very important conversation that Jesus had with His disciples as they were walking along the road. He asked them: *“Who do people say that I am?”* He wanted them to let Him know what they heard from people in general about what they thought about Jesus. They told Jesus that some people thought He was like John the Baptist, others that they thought He was the prophet Elijah who came back from Heaven, and still others that He was one of the Prophets of old. That’s when Jesus asked them the most important question of all: *“But who do YOU say that I am?”*

Peter stepped right into the spotlight at that moment by making a true profession of Faith in Jesus when he said: *“You are the Christ!”* It’s possible that some of the Apostles, or other people walking along the road with them, might have gasped a bit when Peter said that, because what he was really saying was that Jesus was the Messiah, the One that the Jewish people had been waiting for throughout their history as the Chosen People!

Jesus was very complimentary to Peter and told him that he was right, but that he, nor any of them, could tell anyone---at least, not yet! Then, Jesus went on to explain to them that He, the Son of Man, would have to suffer greatly, be rejected by their own religious leaders, and be killed. And then He added, that after 3 days, He would rise! THEN Peter, and the rest of the Apostles, could tell them what they had come to realize: that He was the Messiah, the Savior of the World.

My dear sisters and brothers in Christ, we too need to be sure that we know the answer to Jesus’ question that He surely asks each and every one of us: *“Who do YOU say that I am?”* Do we know for sure, are we convinced in the depths of our being, that Jesus is the Christ! That Jesus is the Son of God! That Jesus is our

Lord and Savior! And if we know that, and are convinced of that, what are we willing to do to live our lives accordingly, and to do what Peter and the Apostles eventually did: to go out to the whole world and tell other people about Jesus!!!

As People of Faith, just like Isaiah told us in the First Reading, we must “open our ears” and “HEAR” what God is saying to us.

As People of Faith, we are challenged to realize that, on our own, we can't possible find the answers we need that will help us make sense out of the “reality” of our lives, here and now.

When Jesus told Peter, and the other Apostles, that He would have to be rejected, suffer and die, that didn't make much sense. But to add to that, Jesus went on to say even more clearly: *“Whoever wishes to come after Me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and that of the Gospel, will save it.”*

Peter had his few minutes in the “spotlight” with his divinely-inspired insight that Jesus IS the Christ. But then Jesus had to correct him when Jesus said to him: *“Get behind Me, Satan. You are thinking not as God does, but as human beings do.”* Peter's time in the spotlight was over, and it would take him, and the other Apostles until the powerful Spotlight of the Resurrection lit up the world forever when Jesus rose from the dead as He had promised. THAT is the Good News that changed “reality” forever. And that is what we must always keep clearly in mind in the midst of the “reality” of our own lives. The only way to get through the challenges we face, the only way to make sense of some of our problems, is to “open our ears that we MAY hear” what God has to say to us, and then DO what Jesus tells us to do: to deny ourselves, take up our cross each day, and follow Jesus!

When Jesus rebuked Peter by telling him *“Get behind me, Satan!”*, He was at the same time giving Peter very important advice. Jesus is the one Who leads. We are the ones who follow Jesus, the Leader. So, we need to be behind Him, not in front of Him, or beside Him, or away from Him. We need to be behind Jesus, and follow where He leads us. And when we do that, we can be sure that Jesus will always lead us into the Spotlight---the Light of His Love---the Light of His Truth----the Light of His Resurrection and New Life.

God bless you, now and always!