

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

They do not practise what they preach.

Addressing the people and his disciples Jesus said, ‘The scribes and the Pharisees occupy the chair of Moses. You must therefore do what they tell you and listen to what they say; but do not be guided by what they do: since they do not practise what they preach. They tie up heavy burdens and lay them on men’s shoulders, but will they lift a finger to move them? Not they! Everything they do is done to attract attention, like wearing broader phylacteries and longer tassels, like wanting to take the place of honour at banquets and the front seats in the synagogues, being greeted obsequiously in the market squares and having people call them Rabbi.

‘You however, must not allow yourselves to be called Rabbi, since you have only one Master, and you are all brothers. You must call no one on earth your father, since you have only one Father, and he is in heaven. Nor must you allow yourselves to be called teachers, for you have only one Teacher, the Christ. The greatest among you must be your servant. Anyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and anyone who humbles himself will be exalted.’

■ The Gospel of the Lord.

Breaking Open the Word



THE SAVING WORD

THIRTY-FIRST SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME / A

5 NOVEMBER 2023

CALLED TO SERVE

Leadership has always been a risky business. With leadership comes prestige and the esteem of others and yet these can be dangerous and murky waters. Those involved in leadership often experience being caught in the tension between the respective privileges and responsibilities that accompany their position. Today’s readings converge in their concern to reflect on the nature of authority and how it should be exercised.

At the time Malachi wrote, the people of Israel were in dire need of religious reform and the priests were called to account for their role in creating that situation. If the charge could be laid at the feet of the priests in Malachi’s time that they did not care for the people, the same could not be said for Paul. While Paul was called to be an apostle, he was also most concerned to offer the gospel without charge. In the ancient world wandering teachers were usually sponsored financially. Paul avoided such ambiguous relationships by not accepting any help from a community till he had established it and was ready to move on to another.

When Jesus sets out to address the disciples and the people about the scribes and Pharisees it probably sounded fairly safe. Anyone can be comfortable when another person is being subjected to scrutiny and criticism! But the second half of the Gospel suddenly changes direction and disciples in every age are given some guiding principles. Firstly, leadership comes from God, secondly, we belong to one family and thirdly, leadership means service.

Christopher Monaghan CP

FIRST READING

Mal 1: 14–2: 2, 8-10

A reading from the prophet Malachi

You have strayed from the way, you have caused many to stumble by your teaching.

I am a great king, says the Lord of hosts, and my name is feared throughout the nations. And now, priests, this warning is for you. If you do not listen, if you do not find it in your heart to glorify my name, says the Lord of hosts, I will send the curse on you and curse your very blessing. You have strayed from the way; you have caused many to stumble by your teaching. You have destroyed the covenant of Levi, says the Lord of hosts. And so I in my turn have made you contemptible and vile in the eyes of the whole people in repayment for the way you have not kept to my paths but have shown partiality in your administration.

Have we not all one Father? Did not one God create us? Why, then, do we break faith with one another, profaning the covenant of our ancestors?

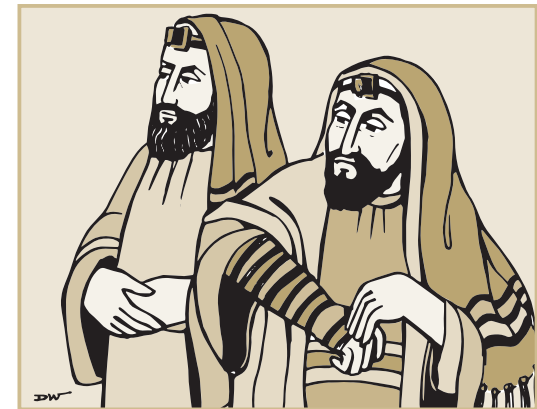
■ The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Ps 130

R. In you, Lord, I have found my peace.

- O Lord, my heart is not proud nor haughty my eyes. I have not gone after things too great nor marvels beyond me. **R.**
- Truly I have set my soul in silence and peace. A weaned child on its mother’s breast, even so is my soul. **R.**
- O Israel, hope in the Lord both now and for ever. **R.**



SECOND READING

1 Thess 2: 7-9, 13

A reading from the first letter of St Paul to the Thessalonians.

We were eager to hand over to you not only the Good News but our lives as well.

Like a mother feeding and looking after her own children, we felt so devoted and protective towards you, and had come to love you so much, that we were eager to hand over to you not only the Good News but our whole lives as well. Let me remind you, brothers, how hard we used to work, slaving night and day so as not to be a burden on any one of you while we were proclaiming God’s Good News to you.

Another reason why we constantly thank God for you is that as soon as you heard the message that we brought you as God’s message, you accepted it for what it really is, God’s message and not some human thinking; and it is still a living power among you who believe it.

■ The word of the Lord.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Mt 23: 9, 10

Alleluia, alleluia! / You have one Father, your Father in heaven; / you have one teacher: the Lord Jesus Christ. / Alleluia!

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