



31st Sunday Ord. Time Yr A

Lectio Divina

Lectio: In this text¹, Jesus begins his fifth discourse in Matthew's Gospel. Jesus finished answering the religious Authorities with a question: "What do you think of the Christ?" (Mt22:42). They couldn't answer him and dared not question him anymore. They are fixed in their opposition to Jesus. Driven by this intransigence of the religious Authorities, Jesus will be betrayed, condemned and die on the Cross. So in this discourse Jesus talks directly to the people. He is preparing his disciples and many of the people who will become the first members of the Church after his impending death and resurrection. The opposition, which Jesus has endured from the religious Authorities, that same opposition, will have to be faced by the members of the emerging Church. The members of the new Church must be true to their faith and trust in Jesus. They will need to be ready to follow their own road and set up their own communities separate from the Jewish communities. They must live out their faith in what they do! They must see through 'flashy' (ostentatious) leaders². Their allegiance must be to Jesus as their Master³. Jesus will live out his way of humility and service with his saving death and resurrection. The new Church must live by the ways of humility⁴ and service⁵ of their Master! Jesus is preparing those who will be the first members of his Church.

Read: **Matthew 23: 1 - 12**

Meditatio: How faithful am I to the truths of my faith. Do I trust in Jesus and his way of love? Do I do things to be noticed? Do I take seriously (i.e. listen to not just hear) the teachings of the Church? In what ways do I help others to live the challenges of their faith? Do I help those in need? Do I help people whose lives are tough? Do I seek places of honour? How much do I rely on the acclaim of others? Do I look to Jesus as my teacher, my master? Who or what rules my life? Do I consider members of my Parish as my brothers and sisters? Do I think I am better than others? How do I cope with 'unity in diversity'? Do I strive to express love through service? Am I basically one who serves? Am I thankful when others serve me? What does being humble mean to me? Do I rely on God the Father's care? Though in heaven, how do I understand God as my Father? How do I deal with those who are obsessed by pride or seeking acclaim? What is true greatness for me?

Oratio: Pray for a commitment to humble service. Pray that we will listen to Jesus' teachings. Pray for the leaders in the Church, may they be faithful to the full teachings of Jesus. Pray that we will support all our brothers and sisters in our faith. Pray that we will help everyone who has a heavy burden to carry. Pray that our service will never be used to attract attention. Pray for those who serve us 'behind the scenes'. Pray in thanks for the care of God the Father. Pray for fathers, may they reflect the care of God the Father. Pray for teachers. Pray that teachers in schools and colleges will be appreciated for all they do. Pray for politicians, may they serve without seeking acclaim. Pray that we will be true followers of Jesus. Pray that we will seek greatness through humble service. Pray for Public Servants, may they live up to the responsibilities they have been given. Pray for unity in service in the Church. Pray that all in the Church will be known by their love⁶ for each other. Pray that the image of 'Christ crucified' may inspire us to never give up on the ways of humble service.

Contemplatio – Dwell in stillness, simply aware of the boundless expanse of mercy that surrounds you.

After your prayer — Make time for prayer and reflection.

✍ Fr Joe

Matthew 23: 1 - 12

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 practice what they preach.⁷ 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.³

You however, must not allow yourselves to be called Rabbi, since you only have one Master, and you are all brothers. You must call no one on earth your father, since you only have 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.⁵ Anyone who exalts himself will be humbled and anyone who humbles himself will be exalted.⁸

Notes:

¹ This text is for the 31st Sunday in Ordinary Time Yr A. This text is not used in 2020 because it falls on 1st November the Solemnity of All Saints.

² The religious Authorities were focussed on their own group's aspect of their faith in God to the exclusion of other groups' aspects. This was the cause of disputes within the different groups that made up the religious Authorities. All of the groups of the religious Authorities had been overtaken by seeking to be the most honoured. So, overcome by pride, all of them had omitted teaching the ways of humility and service. The people needed to be taught about humility and service since this is the way of Jesus.

³ Rabbi means 'my master' in Hebrew.

⁴ This Sunday's Psalm (Ps 130) talks about a heart that is not proud i.e. humble.

⁵ The three Servant Songs of the prophet Isaiah (Is 42:1-9 1st, 49:1-7 2nd, 50:1-9 3rd) were not being presented as an image of the long awaited Messiah. Note: the 3rd Song is the first reading of the Good Friday Liturgy.

⁶ Love in action is service/care.

⁷ In this Sunday's 1st Reading (Mal 1:14, 2:2, 8-10) the prophet Malachi warns the priests of his day to honour God and not cause the people to stumble because of their teaching.

⁸ The text immediately after this text is the 'Seven woes for the Pharisees'. Next Sunday's gospel text skips over Jesus' instructions to the people (i.e. 23: 13 to end Ch. 23 and Ch. 24) and is the start of Ch. 25. We then take up Jesus' instructions to the people with parables for Sundays 32 & 33. Finally, Sunday 34, the last Sunday of Ordinary Time, has the judgement scene.