

HOMILY SUNDAY 33 – C (Homily 03)

“Be wise; Be forgiven; Be ready”

(Daniel 12:1-3; Ps 16; Hebrews 10:11-14, 18; Mk 13:24-32)

Three short phrases succinctly sum up today's three readings: Be Wise; Be Forgiven and Be Ready.

A post-war Italian immigrant family had saved for years to afford the journey to Canada to start a fresh life here. As they had only enough money for the ticket, they brought along peanut butter sandwiches to eat. The father, who was afraid that the children would spend money foolishly, tried to keep the children in their cabin. Finally one son, frustrated with that arrangement after some days of eating only peanut butter sandwiches, snuck out and toured the ship. He returned to tell his father that everything on the ship, including meals and recreation, was included in the price of their passage. They had missed out on all those amenities because of the father's fearfulness.

So it is with many of us. We miss out on the benefits and riches of a life of faith and love, out of fear and misunderstanding of our faith.

The first reading from the book of Daniel advises us to be wise and to do the will of God. Then we will shine like stars in the heavens, and lead others to righteousness. Wisdom is such a precious virtue, a virtue that learns life's lessons from both the positive and the painful events of life. There is much truth that the unwise, those who do not learn from their mistakes, are condemned to repeat them.

One young priest, who burned out and landed in a deep depression, recovered from that well enough, but did not really take to heart some of the lessons he had learned from that experience, and found himself fifteen years later, burning out again and once again in a deep depression, one that took even longer to heal. This time, however, the lessons learned he vowed he would apply, so as to never have that experience again. He was now much wiser than at any point in his life before.

The second reading from the Letter to the Hebrews contains much wisdom within it. We are reminded that Jesus is the High Priest whose one sacrifice

has purified and redeemed humanity. That redemption happens especially through forgiveness. That forgiveness is extended to anyone who repents, desires to change any sinful ways, confesses that sin and opens him or herself to receiving that forgiveness. Where there is forgiveness, there is no need for sacrifice, we are told. That forgiveness does not have to be earned; it is totally a gracious gift from God to a repentant humanity. We simply have to open ourselves up to receiving it. Those who are wise do so. Those who are not cannot receive that forgiveness.

A parishioner once told his pastor that we had to merit or earn heaven. That was the belief that he somehow grew up with in his family. Actually, that belief borders on heresy, called Pelagianism, which holds precisely that we can earn eternal life by our efforts. Nothing could be further from the truth. Forgiveness is a free gift of grace from God. True, the forgiveness should lead to the transformation of our lives into doing the will of God, but ultimately it is all grace.

In the Gospel, Jesus uses apocalyptic language to teach us that we must be ready at all times. No one knows the day, nor the hour that the Lord will come again. What is important is that we hang onto the Word of life; the Word of the Lord. Of course, that means hanging on to the teachings of Jesus, who is the Word made flesh. We are to put our total trust in Jesus and do his will, which of course is to love God with our whole being, and to love others as we love ourselves, to the extent of even loving our enemies.

In his book on Carmelite spirituality entitled *I Want to See God*, the author, P. Marie-Eugene, states that St. Theresa of Avila insisted, adamantly insisted, that her sisters must keep their eyes on Jesus; must have Jesus as their primary focus; must walk in an intimate relationship with Jesus. Even their relationship with the Father and the Spirit, must never be seen as apart from Jesus.

And so it must be with us, if we are to be wise, to be forgiven and to be ready at all times. Jesus must be our focus as well. We must also keep our eyes on Jesus, seeking only to know him, to love him and to serve him with all our hearts.

The Eucharist we celebrate today is a bridge between our present reality, and the awesome future reality that God has in store for us; that Jesus has already initiated.

So, let us be wise; be forgiven, connect our faith with our lives and live in the kingdom of God, ready for when Jesus will come again.