

22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time: We are Candle lightws in the Dark (B)

Deuteronomy 4:1-2,6-8; Psalm 15:2-3,3-4,4-5; James 1:17-18,21b-22,27; Mark 7:1-8,14-15,21-23

Dear family and friends of the Co-Cathedral of St. Theresa Church,

Greetings of peace in the Lord!

How do you describe yourself amid the sad and dark realities in our world today? Christians are like candles in the dark who resist being overcome by darkness through faith in the Lord Jesus. Like a little candle in the dark, no matter how small light we have, it can cast lights around.

How are we to nurture this light? Let us ponder the two pieces of advice from our readings this Sunday:

- Walk blamelessly and act justly to others.
- Set your heart on the heart of God.

Walk blamelessly and act justly to others. This is a loving response to the love we received from God. In the Book of Deuteronomy 4:1-2, 6-8, we heard Moses reminds the people of the excellence of God's laws. That no other nation on earth could boast of such laws; these laws affect their very lives, deep in the heart; formed them who and whose they are, a chosen people of God. They are beautiful and excellent laws because they came from a living God who had chosen to be so close to his people as to amaze outsiders and even the Jews themselves.

The person who lived by God's Law walks blamelessly with God and acts justly to others. It is the code of conduct that a person of faith lives by, that is, the person does what is right, speaks and stands for the truth from the heart; does not slander, does not harm others, has fear in the Lord; does not lend money at interest, and does not take a bribe against the innocent (cf. Ps 15:2-5). St. James further adds to this wisdom that whatever comes from above is a perfect gift capable of saving souls. The Word of God is his gift to us, and we are called to be doers and not just hearers of His Word (cf. James 1:22).

The Responsorial Psalm expresses with great confidence that whoever keeps and does these things will live in the presence of God. Living in the presence of God is what we look forward to because living in his presence means joy and peace. Let us walk blamelessly and act justly to others.

Set your heart on the heart of God. Our Lord Jesus reminds us that it isn't food that defiles us, nor the external religious practices that make us holy. God is not bothered if we eat this or that, but is saddened if we perform actions or religious rituals without love; it is just paying God lip service. We may accuse the Pharisees of being guilty of this practice, but our Lord Jesus goes deeper. He wants us to examine the purity of our hearts. What comes out from inside defiles our souls. We may be fasting and doing pious things, but all kinds of things come from our hearts that do not represent God. We are to set our hearts on the heart of God. The heart of God is mercy. When we deliberately do, we start to live differently. It isn't envy and violence that come from us, but peace, patience, kindness, mercy, and love. When we set our hearts on the heart of God, we hold the blessings given to us sacred, and everything in our lives can become sacred because we carry our hearts with us wherever we go; our work, our rest, our everyday labors. We live and always act in reference to God and the story of being saved by his grace.

These two pieces of advice are summed up by the wisdom of our parish patron St. Therese. She said, "Miss no single opportunity of making some small sacrifice, here by a smiling look, there, by a kindly

word; always doing the smallest right and doing it all for love." No matter how small love/light we give, it is still significant in the eyes of God. The wisdom of St. Therese is essential during this time of the pandemic. Every small acts of love for the common good are necessary to make the light in us increases the light of others.

One of the small acts of love during this time of pandemic is getting vaccinated. Pope Francis, who had fully vaccinated himself, said, "Being vaccinated with vaccines authorized by the competent authorities is an act of love. Vaccination is a simple but profound way of promoting the common good and caring for each other, especially the most vulnerable." I couldn't agree more with Pope Francis that ensuring that most people are vaccinated or helping others do the same is an act of love.

We called ourselves Christian, "a little christ," let us keep our light burning, for no matter how small our light is, God could use it effectively.

God bless you.

Fr. Manny Hewe
Pastor