

Dear Parishioners,

In the past few years we have dealt as a nation with much destruction coming from tornadoes, hurricanes, fires, flooding, and civil unrest. In the case of natural disasters, the damage done can only be predicted for a tiny bit of time before they occur, and sometimes they catch us totally by surprise. For most natural disasters, there are warning systems in place, and when the sirens go off, we panic and seek shelter. The context of this weekend's Gospel is Jesus' judgment and prediction of destruction of towns where He has ministered. In this case, more than sirens, Jesus' warning gives us a whole lifetime to prepare for judgment.

What are the things hidden from the wise but revealed to little ones? The previous verses of Scripture, which were omitted for this weekend's Gospel, indicate that "these things" are the destruction resulting from being unfaithful to God's "gracious will." Jesus "reproaches the towns where most of His mighty deed had been done, since they had not repented" (Mt 11:20). The "little ones" are those who, having received Jesus' revelation about the Father, remain faithful and enter into God's reign of peace (First Reading). In this Gospel, Jesus is the messianic Savior judging those who are unfaithful or faithful. The faithful, having come to Jesus and taken His yoke upon themselves, live in God's peace now. These faithful ones need have no fear of Jesus' judgment.

Scattered throughout this weekend's Gospel passage are a number of contrasts that present us with the choice to be faithful or not: hidden versus revealed ... wise and learned versus little ones ... no one knows versus reveals the Father ... labor and are burdened versus rest ... unknowing versus learn from Jesus ... yoke versus easy and light burden. The first term of each pair points to those who are unfaithful ... those who cannot hear Jesus' message of Good News calling them to repentance ... those who call upon themselves a judgment of death. The second term of each pair points to those who are faithful ... those who hear Jesus' message and change their lives ... those who receive a judgment of life. The rest that Jesus offers ... the easy and light burden ... is possible for the faithful because they need not fear Jesus' judgment. Jesus gives us shelter from every storm. He warns us of every destructive enemy. He yokes us to Himself and assures us of Life and peace. And because of God's gift of free will, it is our choice to make ... to accept or to reject ... to be faithful or unfaithful.

Faithful discipleship calls for a self-sacrificing love that knows no bounds when the good of the other is at stake. No bounds – not even one's life. Faithful discipleship requires of us no less than dying to ourselves. In other words, it is not all about "me" and how it affects my life. We must let go of all our own pretensions ... become meek and mild like Jesus – we need to become little ones – and we need to serve others. In everyday terms, this means that we always seek God's will in our lives. It means we are faithful to Jesus' call to repentance and conversion. "*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength AND you shall love your neighbor as yourself.*" This isn't always easy, because our natural human tendency is to seek our own good. But if we practice what He taught, we'd see that all lives matter and the reasons for the civil unrest in our country and the world would become moot. And so, just as Jesus came to do God's gracious will and brought salvation and peace (First Reading), so when we do God's will, we will be judged worthy of salvation and know peace.

The burden of living the Paschal Mystery is heavy when God is hidden. It is light when God is revealed. Life is bearable when we're in union with Jesus Christ. This is all we need to do ... be in union with Christ so we are in union with God. All we need to do is come to Him and He will give us rest. This is surely a gracious God with a gracious will for us!

May Saint Michael the Archangel defend, guide, protect, and intercede for us always! May you and your families be well and safe!

Fr. Larry