

Chaplain's Bulletin July 9, 2023



Dear Folks,

In our Gospel today, Jesus speaks of the Father revealing to the childlike, things hidden from the learned and the clever. This reminds us that the Gospel is not just a call to be a little nicer, a little kinder, and a little more virtuous. It is not just tweaking our lifestyle. It is turning our vision of life upside down. What seems obvious to the world is opposite in the Gospel. We see some examples in the Scriptures:

2 Corinthians 12:9-10 “but he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness. I would rather boast most gladly of my weaknesses, in order that the power of Christ may dwell with me. Therefore, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and constraints, for the sake of Christ; for when I am weak, then I am strong.”

Matthew 16:25 “For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.” (See Mark 8:35 and Luke 17:33).

Matthew 23:11 “The greatest among you must be your servant.” (See Luke 22:24-27)

Matthew 23:12 “Whoever exalts himself will be humbled; but whoever humbles himself will be exalted.” (See Luke 14:11)

In our second reading St. Paul speaks of flesh vs Spirit. To live according to the flesh is to do what seems natural for fallen humanity: seeking power, pleasure, wealth, and honor. To live according to the Spirit means seeking the cross, seeking to be servants, considering it a privilege to be persecuted for the sake of the Gospel. To do this, we need to be transformed by grace: “I urge you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God, your spiritual worship. Do not conform yourselves to this age, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect (Romans 12:1-2).” When we are so transformed, we don’t entirely fit in this world. “Beloved, I urge you as aliens and sojourners to keep away from worldly desires that wage war against the soul. Maintain good conduct among the Gentiles, so that if they speak of you as evildoers, they may observe your good works and glorify God on the day of visitation (1 Peter 2:11-12).”

Michael Frost (an evangelical Protestant) wrote a couple of short but interesting books, “Surprise the World” and “Keep Christianity Weird”. He suggested we be careful about the desire to fit in. We are called to be misfits.

Blessings,

Fr. Jim