

The Living Word

Thirty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A

5 November 2023

First Reading Mal 1:14 – 2:2.8-10

You have strayed from the way, you have caused many to stumble by your teaching.

I am a great king, says the Lord of hosts, and my name is feared throughout the nations. And now, priests, this warning is for you. If you do not listen, if you do not find it in your heart to glorify my name, says the Lord of hosts, I will send the curse on you and curse your very blessing. You have strayed from the way; you have caused many to stumble by your teaching. You have destroyed the covenant of Levi, says the Lord of hosts. And so I in my turn have made you contemptible and vile in the eyes of the whole people in repayment for the way you have not kept to my paths but have shown partiality in your administration.

Have we not all one Father? Did not one God create us? Why, then, do we break faith with one another, profaning the covenant of our ancestors?

Responsorial Psalm Ps 130

(R.) In you, Lord, I have found my peace.

1. O Lord, my heart is not proud
nor haughty my eyes.
I have not gone after things too great
nor marvels beyond me. (R.)
2. Truly I have set my soul
in silence and peace.
A weaned child on its mother's breast,
even so is my soul. (R.)
3. O Israel, hope in the Lord
both now and for ever. (R.)

Second Reading 1 Thes 2:7-9.13

We were eager to hand over to you not only the Good News but our lives as well.

Like a mother feeding and looking after her own children, we felt so devoted and protective towards you, and had come to love you so much, that we were eager to hand over to you not only the Good News but our whole lives as well. Let me remind you, brothers, how hard we used to work, slaving night and day so as not to be a burden on any one of you while we were proclaiming God's Good News to you.

Another reason why we constantly thank God for you is that as soon as you heard the message that we brought you as God's message, you accepted it for what it really is, God's message and not some human thinking; and it is still a living power among you who believe it.

Gospel Acclamation Mt 23:9. 10

Alleluia, alleluia!

*You have one Father, your Father
in heaven;*

*you have one teacher: the Lord Jesus
Christ.*

Alleluia!

Gospel Mt 23:1-12

They do not practise what they preach.

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 practise what they preach. 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.

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



Reflection by Fr Michael Tate

There have been periods in the church's history where the burdens placed on the shoulders of people – particularly an exaggerated sense of guilt for certain sins – truly weighed people down, creating a terrible sense of unworthiness, leading to the living of distorted lives.

Our Lord makes it clear that leaders cannot evade responsibility for this by hiding behind honorific titles.

In the Gospels, we find the One who said: 'Come to me all you who toil and are burdened and I will refresh you. Take my yoke upon you and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden light.' (Matt 11:28-30)

If people don't find that the burden laid on them by Church leaders (who often long to be greeted obsequiously) leads to refreshment and rest for their souls, then it is right to question the burden, and to question the leaders who impose such burdens.

Perhaps we could pause for a moment to pray for Pope Francis whose favoured titles are simply: 'Bishop of Rome', 'Servant of the Servants of God'.

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Wordsearch

Try to find these words:

above	down	Moses
banquet	help	obey
best	humble	Pharisees
do	Messiah	teacher

Y T M U J Y N L W G D L Z F S O
H C D E T D L K Q M I F L X G K
W Z X O S Q I R E H C A E T U B
I A F X R S L F E S F J L M A L
D D O B E Y I Y S R R Q L N K L
B Z G H M C A A V J Q A Q E P T
J K Y N A E O G H L S U Q T A A
D I P X J N I A L J E G J I B S
Q U O H C I R P D T R M E O B U
L A A M A E I U X X V R V G M R
Q T I E R R X O E O M E K D O M
E D F X N W I E L B M U H O S F
H T S E B R H S U X P R N W E O
E J K T N W G Q E B Y R B N S D
L W D X A S S M K E K U H N Q P
P F I P W Y L T W M S H D C A E

St Martin of Tours was born the son of a soldier, circa 315 AD. Born in present day Hungary, he was brought up in Pavia, Italy. As a young officer he encountered a naked beggar, and having nothing to give but the clothes off his own back, he cut his military cloak in two and gave half to the beggar. Later he had a vision of Christ wearing his cloak and soon after he was baptised. Before a battle, St Martin asked to be discharged from the army, stating that as Christ's soldier he was not permitted to fight. When accused of cowardice he offered to stand unarmed on the battlefield between the two opposing armies. After his release, St Martin founded a monastery at Liguage – the first in France – and was made the bishop of Tours in 370 AD. He was also an active missionary in rural France and spoke in defence of those being executed by the Emperor for practising magic and other heresies. He was one of the first non-martyrs to be made a saint.

Complete the maze by making the right choices

