

Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time - 01-29-2017

“Consider your own calling, brothers and sisters, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth.”

In truth, with respect to the magnificence of God, no one can claim to be powerful or of noble birth in this life.

This is why Saint Paul calls us to humility and admonishes us that, “Whoever boasts, should boast in the Lord.” Specifically, he tells us in another place that we should boast only in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Some time back I was reading a book by then Pope Benedict entitled, *Last Testament*. Among so many beautiful things, he wrote, “I am entirely an average Christian.” Of his own family, Benedict affirmed that, “we were completely normal people.”

Elsewhere he writes, the difficulty with God is the question of evil. And how can it be reconciled with his...goodness. But then he goes on to say, that a difference can be found between a question having an answer and our ability to know the answer.”

He continues, “If I don’t understand something, that doesn’t mean that it is wrong, but that I’m too small to understand it.” However, he also said, “The closer you come to God’s face, the more intensely you feel how much you have done wrong.”

This is a great summary of today’s readings. “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are the meek,

for they will inherit the land. Blessed are the clean of heart, for they will see God.”

Benedict was fully aware of the holiness of God and his own sinfulness.

Listen again to the words of Benedict. “The closer you come to his face, the more intensely you feel how much you have done wrong.”

But this recognition of his own sinfulness didn’t cause Benedict to despair. Pride brings despair while humility gives birth to hope. Benedict clearly hoped to see the face of the God but not without cost.

Interestingly, just after our Lord highlighted what it means to be blessed, he concluded the beatitudes with the reality of evil.

He said, “Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of evil against you falsely because of me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven.”

For Benedict even this threat of evil lead him to the God who is love because it lead him the cross of the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who loved him and gave himself up completely for his salvation.

Some people see evil in the world and say how can there be a God. But when our beloved Benedict saw evil in the world he said how

can there not be a God even if I can't fully understand. Somebody has to make it all right in the end?

When Benedict was pope he was often ridiculed but he knew that Jesus' promise to the faithful in this life was persecution if they hoped to enjoy the reward of heaven.

I think he summed it up best when he wrote, "If a pope were only ever applauded, he would have to ask himself whether or not he was doing things right."

We should ask ourselves a similar question. If we are only ever applauded, or another way to look at it, if we are only ever seeking applause, if we shy away from the difficult teachings of the Church and fail to acknowledge our faith in public are we really following our humble Lord and God, Jesus Christ? Are we doing things right?

Jesus promised us great reward. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the land. Blessed are the clean of heart, for they will see God" but not without the cross.

He concluded, "Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness...Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of evil against you falsely because of me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven."

Then we can hope for a noble re-birth in the life to come.