

November 17, 2019

Mal 3:19-20a; 2 Thes 3:7-12; Lk 21:5-19

What will become of our memory many years from now? We all want to believe that people will know us for many years. But, it's really only a small number of people that achieve lasting fame. All of us have heard of Alexander the Great, Galileo, and Cleopatra - although some of us may not exactly know what they did to make them famous. Have you ever heard of Cleisthenes? He invented democracy. What about Mary Anning? She was an archeologist whose contributions to science rival that of Darwin - yet generally unknown. How about Elisha Kane? He was an explorer who not only accomplished some great feats, but was so well known in the United States 150 years ago that his funeral was second in size only to that of Abraham Lincoln - yet almost no one today knows who he was (or ever heard of him). Well maybe the world will not remember me, you'll say, but surely my own family will. I would ask you to think of your great-great grandparents, how much do you know about them? How much will your grandchildren know of them.

You may be saying "Gee Father Steve, such uplifting thoughts!" I only want to piggyback on what Jesus is saying in the Gospel: *All that you see here - the days will come when there will not be left a stone upon another stone that will not be thrown down.* Jesus' disciples were focused on the material beauty of the temple - but Jesus reminds them that things here on earth are temporary, no matter how much we try to have them last forever. We can put a lot of energy into building our legacy on earth, into building our fame in our own minds, into trying to get people to like us, into building up fortunes and monuments to our success. It takes a lot of energy to build up a legacy that likely won't be there in a hundred years. Where else can we put that energy? You know, you don't need to be in a history book, or to have monuments to you, or to have many adoring fans to be important.

Even people like me who will never achieve the fame of a Julius Caesar, a Mark Anthony, or an Einstein are special to God. There is a place to build your monument that will never go away - not made out of granite that will eventually wear away, but carved in the mind of God - an everlasting memorial in the heart of the God who loves each of us. In God's mind there doesn't have to be books and teachers to tell people who you are, or monuments that need to be maintained because the forces of nature constantly erode them. God has a unique ability because

of being God. God can think of you individually all the time for eternity while also doing the same for everyone else. God holds a thought of love for you at every moment from now through all eternity. That means a lot more than that trophy for participation that was supposed to make you feel so special.

So what can we do with that energy that we don't need to spend on our legacy? Well we can begin by looking to two things. First the maximizing of the world in our time. In our second reading we heard: *We hear that some are conducting themselves among you in a disorderly way, by not keeping busy but minding the business of others. Such people we instruct and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to work quietly and to eat their own food.* If we don't need to focus our energies on our legacy then we don't need to be minding the business of others. If we pay attention into others' business to find fault, this will cause negative thoughts about them, and generate uncharitable thoughts about them, and all this can lead to arguments. If we look at others and judge them to be better or more popular than us, then we can get sad and give way to envy and jealousy which makes us hate them and look down on ourselves. This is the disorderly way. If we are confident of the love of God for us and for others, then we can be less worried about ranking ourselves and others and try to see all people (ourselves included) as God sees them. This will lead us into acting in ways that will promote greater harmony and peace. And also it frees up energy to use to be of Christian service to others.

The second thing we can look into in using our energy is in looking to the life beyond this world. In our first reading we heard: *Lo, the day is coming, blazing like an oven, when all the proud and all evildoers will be stubble ... But for you who fear my name, there will arise the sun of justice with its healing rays.* As we said earlier, all this world and all the things of this world are temporary. At the end of our time do we want to have worked to build monuments and a legacy that will eventually fade, or to working to deepen our worship, prayer, and closeness to God. Jesus talks about bad times that are inevitable. He does not want his followers to be discouraged when these things happen and think he is not there. Jesus promises in the Gospel to those who hold true to his name: *You will be hated by all because of my name, but not a hair on your head will be destroyed. By your perseverance you will secure your lives.* We look to an everlasting life - a life that we enter by staying close to God by participating in the Eucharist and the other sacraments, a life that is not temporary, but a life where we will not worry of who remembers us but rather hold an eternal legacy in the mind and heart of God for all eternity.