

Homily for Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

July 5, 2020

by Dcn. Hicks Armor

Our first reading is from the Book of Zechariah. This is the next to last book in the Old Testament and is one of the Prophetic Books. It is named after its author Zechariah, and the title means “The Lord Remembers”. This is a key point.

Zechariah’s prophetic ministry took place in the postexilic period, around 538 B.C. at a time when the Jews had been freed by the Persians following their captivity by the Babylonian and were allowed to return to Jerusalem. During this time, the Jews had endured numerous hardships. They were exiled, wandered in the desert, had been in captivity and basically for many years had been a nomadic people. When they were finally freed and allowed to return to their land, it had all but been destroyed. They were laboring to rebuild their city, their homes, their lives. They were tired, and now they were hearing from Zechariah who was concerned about the rebuilding of the temple that had been destroyed. He warned the people that they must listen to God’s message through the prophets. He was also interested in their spiritual renewal.

The people hardly had food, housing, or the necessities of life. Zechariah’s message is to rebuild the temple and God will return to you. Build it and they will come. Zechariah’s message was about the spiritual life, and their concern was about their physical life.

Listen to what he tells them:

See, your king shall come to you;
a just savior is he,
meek, and riding on an ass,
on a colt, the foal of an ass.
He shall banish the chariot from Ephraim,
and the horse from Jerusalem;
the warrior’s bow shall be banished,
and he shall proclaim peace to the nations.
His dominion shall be from sea to sea,
and from the River to the ends of the earth.

Does this sound familiar...This is the Psalm Sunday prophesy for when Jesus rides into Jerusalem.

This is reinforced in our second reading from St. Paul to the Romans. He says:

You are not in the flesh;
on the contrary, you are in the spirit,
if only the Spirit of God dwells in you.
Whoever does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.

For if you live according to the flesh, you will die,
but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body,
you will live.

Paul is telling the Romans the same thing in a different way that Zechariah told the Jews 500 years before. And that same thing applies to us today. We have to put away our day to day frustrations and focus on the things that matter...Jesus, salvation and our spiritual life.

In today's Gospel, Matthew is telling us the same thing. Jesus says:

“Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened,
and I will give you rest.

Take my yoke upon you and learn from me,
for I am meek and humble of heart;
and you will find rest for yourselves.

For my yoke is easy, and my burden light.”

I am the way, the truth and the life, anyone who believes in me will have eternal life.

The Jews were tired they had wandered in the desert for 40 years, we get tired, we have to wear face masks, social distance, deal with the frustrations of home school, restaurants closed...

What is our real focus...how are we supposed to live...what does God expect of us?

All He asks is that we... believe in Him.

Just like Jesus told St. Thomas in Friday's Gospel, when Thomas is in the upper room with the other disciples and Jesus appears to them. Thomas has been the doubter of the group.

When Jesus appeared He said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands, and bring your hand and put it into my side, and do not be unbelieving, but believe."

Thomas answered and said to him, "My Lord and my God!"

Jesus said to him, "Have you come to believe because you have seen me?"

Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed."

All he asks of us is to believe. Take a little time, remember what I did for you...and just believe in me.

There are a lot of Zechariah's and St. Paul's in the world telling us what to do. The real one we need to really focus on... listen to... is Jesus. He is the last prophet...the real prophet...He is the one who came to fulfill the prophecies.

Remember what Jesus says in today's gospel..."No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son ...and anyone to whom the Son wishes to reveal him."

Jesus chose to reveal Himself to us...He is God... It is a very simple choice...believe and be saved.

He lived out His prophecy and all He asks of us... just as he told Thomas "believe in me". And He even said...those who believe...they are "Blessed".

Let us not be like the Jews in the time of Zechariah...nomadic, frustrated, tired, but be active, engaged and committed to our faith today.

It is easy for us to become frustrated, even today a holiday, when we try and have holiday celebrations and we have to wear face masks, social distance and continually wash our hands...even as we try and visit family members in nursing homes through open windows or glass doors...remember...if we just trust in Jesus...keep the faith...he will provide...remember His words to the Jewish people...

The yoke is easy and the burden light...

Let us all listen...heed and rejoice in our faith life with Him.

May God Bless you.