

Third Sunday of Advent, Cycle C December 13, 2009

Readings: Zephaniah 3:14-18a; Philippians 4:4-7; Luke 3:10-18

Be Who You Are Called to Be

As you may know, we have taken the youth group to the Franciscan University in Steubenville, Ohio for the last four years for a weekend youth conference. There are always great speakers and preachers who know how to relate well to the teens. A couple of years ago, one of the priests that taught at the university was the presider at the Saturday Mass. I looked in the program before Mass and checked out the list of his credentials; he was a very learned man with many advanced degrees in theology after his name. Father was maybe a little younger than me and said a beautiful Mass, but during his homily something happened that I found very liberating and very educational. He was presenting a very good and sound teaching, but in an attempt to try to relate to the youth, he tried to interject a rap music style to present the main theme of his message. It didn't work. It definitely wouldn't have worked for me, either, if I had tried it. There were others at the conference who could rap their message to the teens, but it didn't fit with who he was. It doesn't fit with who I am.

And I say that the experience was liberating and educational because it reminded me to be comfortable with who I am; not to try to be something that I am not, or try to be like someone else. I had often envied those preachers who can excite the congregation so that they want to yell out *Amen* or *Alleluia* in response to their preaching. I wished that I could be more like them, and thought that I should strive in that direction. But my experience that day at Mass in Steubenville taught me that I would be foolish trying to imitate someone else's style. I have to be me, and unfortunately you have to live with homilies that are not as exciting as you may like.

We all have to try to be the best we can at what we do using the gifts and talents God has given us. We need to use those gifts prudently and according to God's will. In our gospel this morning, John the Baptist tells the tax collectors that they do not need to give up their occupation to follow Jesus; but instead that they have to be the best and most honest tax collectors. He tells them: ***"Stop collecting more than what is prescribed."*** He tells the soldiers to be the soldiers they are called to be by Christ—to be fair and honest. He tells them: ***"Do not practice extortion, do not falsely accuse anyone, and be satisfied with your wages."***

God doesn't call us to be like someone else; He calls us to be the best person we can be. Be the best parent or student or worker you can be. If God gave you talents to be a mechanic, then try to be the best mechanic you can be while still following the teachings of Christ. If God calls you to be a nurse, be the best nurse you can be. There are many nurses in our family. One suffered through her training weeks on the cancer floor; she struggled with all the sadness and death that were so prevalent, and much preferred working with the young children in pediatrics. Another nurse, however, actually chose to work in a cancer ward working with terminal patients. She sits down with them like a long lost friend and asks and learns about their life story; helps them recall the joys and happiness that they have received as blessings—she brightens their last days. Is one of

these nurses better than the other? No; they are both different as using their God-given talents to the fullest.

So I think this Advent is a time that we can reflect on whether we are using the talents God has given us to the fullest. We shouldn't look outside of ourselves and compare what we do to what someone else does. It's a time to look inward without worrying about what others think and how others may judge us. It's between each of us as individuals and God; He is the only Judge that should concern us. We have the Christmas carol *The Little Drummer Boy* which can be a good reminder. The drummer boy couldn't give the Christ child gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh, like the magi did. His gift was the being the best drummer he could be.

In the same way our gift to Jesus at Christmas is being the best person we can be. Be generous according to the gifts you have received. John the Baptist said: ***"Whoever has two cloaks should share with the person who has none. And whoever has food should do likewise."*** Be honest and fair in all your dealings in whatever career or walk of life you find yourself. Look to Jesus, listen to God, for what you should do.

At the final judgment when Jesus comes again he is not going to judge me compared to someone else. He will not judge whether my behavior was better, whether I said more prayers or went to Mass more often, or whether I gave more to charity than John Doe down the street. He will judge me according to how I used the gifts and blessings that he gave me. ***"Much will be required of the person entrusted with much, and still more will be demanded of the person entrusted with more."*** (Luke 12:48)

We have all been entrusted with different blessings, talents, and gifts, but we have all received much. Be the best person God wants you to be.

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