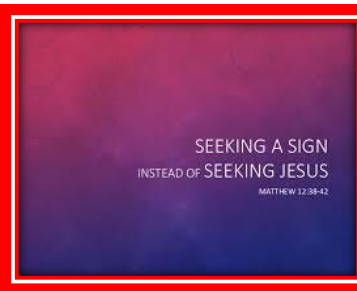


July 20, 2020 – Monday of the 16th Week in Ordinary Time



**Being closer to Jesus, the Great 'Sun' and living our Christian Lives, in 'sincerity', in zealously and with a deeper passion for the 'Son' of God.
(Mic 6:1-4, 6-8 and Mt 12:38-42)**

1. What God wants of us; what God asks of us:

In the First reading, the prophet Micah gives a succinct statement of what God wants of us, what God asks of us, **'to act justly, to love tenderly and to walk humbly with your God'**. It is a very striking formulation of the two great commandments, to love God with all one's being and our neighbor as ourselves. Walking humbly with our God implies a loving and trusting relationship with God. Acting justly and loving tenderly spells out the meaning of loving our neighbor as ourselves. In the gospel reading, Jesus claims to be greater than the wise men and women of Israel, greater than Solomon, and greater than the prophets of Israel, greater than Jonah. Yet, much of Jesus' teaching is in line with the teaching of the wise men and prophets of Israel, especially the prophets. Jesus is in continuity with his Jewish tradition but also goes beyond it. He claims to be bringing it to completion, fulfillment. God has given us the gift of his Son, Jesus, someone greater than all the prophets and wise people of Israel. We are indeed blest to have received such a gift. God's gift of his Son is with us to the end of time. Someone greater than Solomon and Jonah is here, with us, now and every day of our lives. We don't come to Jesus demanding signs from him, like the Pharisees in the gospel reading. The Lord will give us signs of his presence, without us having to ask for them. **The most powerful of his signs are to be found in the lives of all those people who are trying to act justly, to love tenderly, and to walk humbly with their God.**

2. Jesus invites us to be "sincere" – "without wax"

The English word (according to a popular legend) 'sincere' comes from two Latin words: 'sin-e' and 'cere'. 'Sin-e' means: without - 'Cere' means: wax - So 'sin-e' + 'cere' means "without wax". Sincere, therefore, literally means, being "without wax". In ancient Greek, when art flourished, it was a common practice to repair with "invisible wax", any vase or statue that had, as a result of carelessness, been damaged.

Sometimes while chiseling the bust in marble, if the chisel slipped out the Sculptor's hand, some edge of the statue would be chipped off. Rather than taking the trouble of

making a new bust, the sculptor would repair the features with “wax” so that the flaw could not be detected, unless by very close scrutiny. However, if the client happened to be a knowledgeable person, he would carry the finished statue into the open before paying for it and examine it carefully in the sunlight! If the statue was “sincere” i.e. “without wax” – it would remain firm; else some parts of it would drop down! “Sincerity” of the statue was thus examined in the presence of sunlight! Am I a “sincere” person “without the wax” of deceit, malice, corruption, or guile? I need to come into the presence of the Sunlight – Jesus – to be examined! The Gospel of the day presents an incident where the “insincerity” of a certain group of people was exposed in the warming and bright presence of Jesus, the Light of the world.

Some of the Scribes and the Pharisees said to Jesus, “Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you” (Mt 12: 38). **Signs are given in the Bible:** **a.** God gave the sign of the ‘rainbow’, as a sign of the covenant, so that the waters would never become a flood, to destroy all mortal beings (Gen 9: 13-15). **b.** God empowered Moses with many signs when Moses had to present himself before Pharaoh, in a bid to ask him “to let go” of the Israelites (Ex 3: 12). **c.** Two hundred and fifty men were consumed, by a fire from the Lord, after they had unworthily offered incense to God (Num 16: 35). **d.** God gave a sign to Gideon, when he asked for it, humbly, as a confirmation in his entrusted task (Judg 6: 17). **e.** God gave a sign at King Saul’s anointing (1 Sam 10: 1-13). However, in today’s Gospel, we find that when the Pharisees and the Scribes, demand a sign, Jesus doesn’t yield to it! What was the reason?

- a. The demand of the Pharisees and Scribes was a demand for a sign “not in humility” or “to really cast off any doubt” • Rather, this was a demand for a sign that exposed their obstinacy to remain in unbelief!
- b. In fact, Jesus sees through their “insincerity” He sees through the fact, that they were “with wax” – the wax of deceit, falsity, and deception! • And this their “wax” of trickery, began to melt in the presence of Jesus, the Powerful Light!

Therefore Jesus comes down heavily on them and says, “An **evil** and **adulterous** generation seeks a sign...” (Mt 12: 39) Note the two strong words that Jesus uses

- a.** Evil: pointing to a wicked heart that sought destruction and spoiling the lives of others. **b.** Adulterous: pointing to an unfaithful heart that reduced relations to a mere pragmatic nature and was characterized by cheating and disloyalty.

Is my life also characterized by constantly wanting “only” signs from God? • I expect immediate answers to all my prayers, in the way I want. • I always want some miracles, as I choose, to keep the light of my faith burning. • I get depressed and feel totally lost when I do not get the signs that I expected in life. • I witness a lot of wondrous deeds around me, but still, I remain obstinate in my unbelief.

Is my Christian life only a sign-seeking one or is my Christian life, rather, a Savior-seeking one? Am I obsessed with wanting only miracles or am I, rather, passionate and

zealous about the Master? Jesus invites us to be “sincere” – “without wax”. • In His bright presence, all “wax” of duplicity and hypocrisy will melt. • In His glowing light, all “wax” of dishonesty and deception will dissolve

Let us pray:

Lord Jesus, may I be closer to You, the Great ‘Sun’ and live my Christian Life, in "sincerity", in zealousness and with a deeper passion for the 'Son' of God. Give me Your Grace and guide me to become Your Sign by acting justly, loving tenderly and walking humbly with You.

Jesus, I Trust In You