**31st Sunday: Call to discipleship at St Pius X**

"The greatest among you must be your servant" Today Christ calls us to serve one another in Love.

**The Book of Malachi**, from where we got our first reading today, is the last book of the Old Testament, bridging the gap between the Old Testament and the New Testament. It has only three chapters. The Hebrew word "Malachy" means 'my messenger'. The author of this book lived about 100 years after the Babylonian exile had ended. He writes to his fellow Jews addressing the issues of corruption, injustice, poverty, and false religiosity happening in Jerusalem. The message of Malachy, God's prophet reminds the Jews - God's chosen nation, of their willful disobedience, beginning with the priests. They had shown contempt for God's name and divine laws, and have become arrogant. Their relationship with God was broken, and now judgment and punishment would be theirs.

However, in the midst of this wickedness, a few faithful – the remnant – still loved and honored God. God would shower his blessings upon these men and women (3:16-18). Prophet Malachy paints a stunning picture of Israel's unfaithfulness that clearly shows the people to be worthy of punishment but woven throughout this message is ***hope – the possibility of forgiveness.*** This is beautifully expressed in "But for you who fear my name, the Sun of Righteousness will rise with healing in his wings. And you will go free, leaping with joy like the calves let out to pasture". (4:2).

The signs of false religion: When religion is burdensome, it seeks to please men, attracts attention to self, hinders your faith, and then makes you look good only on the outside. Such religion does not glorify God. The gospel today says "They tie up heavy loads and put them on men's shoulders, but they are not willing to lift a finger to move them." Wearing religious ornaments like phylacteries and Tassels to display their piety.

(Phylacteries are a set of small black leather cubed-shaped boxes with leather straps containing scrolls that had texts from the Torah. God instructed every Jewish adult male 13 years and older to wear it one on the right arm facing the heart and the other on the forehead during religious services excluding the Sabbath. And Tassels – God also commanded them to tie special knots at the 4 corners of their prayer shawl. This was to remind them of God and their obligations to Him. Deut. 6:8 & 11:18. The Pharisees increased the size of their phylacteries and tassels to make them very prominent for all to see).

Religion is often more focused on ritual and tradition, while Christianity builds on faith in God and focuses on a personal relationship with God. Christianity is about God entering human history to graciously save men and women through His Son Jesus Christ and man's response to God's invitation to be saved. And only Christ can walk you to heaven.

**This is our Call to Discipleship weekend**; we are dynamics disciples of Christ here in St Pius X. We thank you all who take an active part in our ministries. We are telling you today that "The "Roll" you play in our church is vital. We would "crumble" without you. Thank you for your service. And we also encourage everyone to be more engaged in our community. We are the Church, and we are the body of Christ. Today prayerfully consider becoming more involved in one or two of the ministries or commissions in our parish.

**Under Liturgy and Hospitality**, we have the following: greeters, ushers, announcements, lectors, Eucharistic ministers, homebound ministers, music ministry (the choir), alter ministers, catechists, youth ministry, children's ministry, catechists for children's liturgy, nursery attendants, altar servers, and sacristans.

**Under Councils and Commissions**, we have the following: Christian Service Commission, Education Commission, Parish Life Commission, Worship Commission, occasional committees (these help with funeral luncheons, and receptions, they also help to provide baked goods, etc.), marriage preparation couples, baptism guides, Council of Catholic Women, the Catholic Daughters, and the Knights of St Columbus.

Think of joining one of the small groups we plan to form here in the parish sometime before the season of Lent. "The greatest among you will be your servant" (Matthew 23:11-12).
***Reflection: Lord in what ways do you want me to serve you? God bless you. Amen.***

**Fr Martin Ezeihuaku, MSP.**

PS Fr. Martin's extemporaneous (and longer) delivery of this homily may be seen in full in the archived Mass from Sunday: https://www.stpiusxblgs.org/worship/streaming-mass/