

Thirty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time

Year A

Mal 1:14b-2:2b, 8-10

Ps 131:1, 2, 3

I Thess 2:7b-9, 13

Mt 23:1-12

Edward J. Enright, O.S.A.

At the time of our Baptism, we are anointed on the crown of the head with the oil of Chrism, symbolizing our participation in the three offices of Christ: priest, prophet, and king. By this participation, we are called by Christ to take ownership of, and take responsibility for the Body of Christ, of which each of us is a member by that very same Baptism. Since this Body is an organic whole, each of us is a part of the other and, therefore, we are to be caretakers of each other. It is together, in other words, that we are Christ for the world in which we live. That being the case, when anyone of us engages in behavior incompatible with the Gospel and, therefore, incompatible with being a member of the Body of Christ, we diminish Christ and his ministry in the world of our time.

God's word today challenges all of us, who are priests, prophets, and kings by Baptism, but especially the ordained leadership of the Body of Christ, to reflect deeply on what it means to be Christ for others today. We are most the Body of Christ in the celebration of the Eucharist, which as the Second Vatican Council calls "the center and summit of the Christian life," and, therefore, each of us individually and together must be Eucharistically focused. Malachi, the messenger, chastises all of us priests, but especially those who preside at worship, for not living up to the calling that Christ has made; our immorality and our false teaching. Jesus, in today's gospel, chastises us as well, because we have not practiced what we have preached, and have considered titles and honors more important than being witnesses of Christ; of being Christ himself to our world.

If the Eucharistic celebration is truly the center and summit of our lives, then every dimension of our lives must be influenced to the depths of our beings. Since we are taught by Christ in the word, and we eat and drink God, the God who sacrificed himself for us in the humanity of Jesus, at this Eucharistic celebration, then our lives must be true to Christ and, if we are genuinely priests, prophets and kings, true to ourselves and to one another. We are responsible for manifesting Christ in a world that most needs him, and yet finds it hard to see him, because we, the church, allegedly the Body of Christ, have failed Christ miserably. We have done so because we have not been Eucharistically centered and, therefore, have not made Christ's life and teaching our own. The love of Christ calls us to conversion, that we might become the Eucharistic people he wants us to be.