**“We are Called to be Disciplined”**

All our readings today point us to the word ‘discipline.’ It is through discipline that we will enter into the Kingdom of God. We will not enter the Kingdom of God by only association or by saying we know Jesus. Our entrance into the Kingdom of God is not by choosing what we like, but by following Jesus’ commands, teachings, and acting on them.

When the Israelites through disobedience offended God, God disciplined them for what they had done in abandoning Him. The way God disciplined them was by dispersing them all over the world. The beauty about God is that in disciplining them, He brought greater God out of it. He used Israelites dispersion among the nations to make His fame and glory know to those nations. By so doing, He brought all nations from the East, North, South, and West to know Him as the true living God. We who are here today are the recipient of God’s discipline of His people.

God disciplines us out of love for us. If we keep our faith and are open to Him, He will use the pain and sorrow we feel during our trials and tribulations, to bring us closer to Him. As the Letters to the Hebrews tells us, if we do not turn our backs on God during our trials and tribulations, God who is a divine loving parent will turn our pain into joy. It will be a joy that makes us forget the pain and suffering of His discipline.

It is like a woman in labor who forgets all the pain experienced as soon as she holds her baby in her arms. Her labor pains turns into in describable joy. All she would be able to do is, smile, giggle, and look at the baby with pride. When that child grows up to become an outstanding citizen, the parent would continue to rip the reward of their discipline and love of the child. The child would be a happy and joyful child who would have the fear of God.

That is the type of joy people who place their trust in God would feel after going through trials and tribulations. My sisters and brothers, it is because of discipline and love that God said to Eve in the Garden of Eden, in pain she would bring forth children and to Adam, in toil will you get your daily food. It is His way of teaching us to be dependent on Him.

God expects us to learn something from all our experience in life. When we are deprived, we can learn to be generous when we are blessed with more than what is sufficient for us. From illness, we can learn not to take our good health for granted. From weakness we can learn to depend on God and those whom He sends us to be His mouth, hand and feet. My brothers and sisters please do not waste what might be considered to be bad experience of life by losing hope. In imitation of God, use them for greater good. Use them to be kind, generous, and merciful.

In our Gospel, Jesus tells us that it is those who are disciplined who would enter into His kingdom. It is those who love what He commands and those who desire what He promised who will be with Him in Paradise. Jesus used the simile of the narrow gate to tell us that it will not be easy for those who desire heaven. The narrow gate implies discipline and following His teachings. Our focus should not be on things that are of this earth but on things that are of heaven.

Jesus says, the entrance ticket to heaven is not just saying I know Jesus and I know His teachings. The entrance ticket to heaven is to hear His words and act on them. My sisters and brothers, this is the time for us to act on His words. It is the time to carry out His commandments. So that on that day, we might receive His judgment and mercy.

Jesus does not want us to fall into the trap of false independence which leads to self-worship. He wants us to be disciplined, by listening to His words through His Church. He did not establish His Church for His benefit, He established His Church for our benefit. His words are not empty words, but are words that would get us through the narrow gate. Jesus will know us only if we hear and act on His word. Otherwise, He would tell us, I do not know you, you evil doer.

As we come to receive Him in the Eucharist, for those who might not fully belief, let us ask Him for the grace to fully belief that His words are not empty words when He said this is my body, this is my blood.