**“God Desires our Total Dedication”**

All our readings point us to, why our life should be dedicated to God. Our first priority should be the worship of God. He is the reason that we live. He is the reason why we breathe. He is the reason why we obey His will and not our will. He is the reason why we help our brothers and sisters who are not as comfortable as we are.

In our first reading, we are given an example of those who were not dedicated to God. They lived for themselves. They were self-satisfied. They enjoyed the finest things of life. However, they did not see what was wrong with a picture of poverty all around them. They ignored the poor, the weak, and did not show mercy to others who were less fortunate than they were. God said through prophet Amos that they would suffer at the hands of their enemies here on earth even before the final judgment. They would be the first to go into exile.

We can relate to all these in our world today. We do not have to go far to see the poor and the weak who need our help. Do we lift a finger to help them? Do we bound their wounds so they could stand or do we just say to ourselves, ***“if not by the grace of God there goes I”*** and not bother to help them get back on their feet.

Can you imagine how dreadful it would be for a rich, greedy, self-serving person to lose everything they owned in one day! To lose all their pride and joy in one day! That person would be worse off than someone who had been materially suffering for a long time. Exile for someone who had been poor for a long time would be easier than it would be for a self-centered person.

For someone who is rich, surviving in exile would be difficult because the person would not be able to adapt easily to a tough life. Furthermore, Part of their suffering would be that the poor person who goes into exile after the rich person would might laugh and mock them because now, they would in the same shoes as any poor person.

Someone who had been suffering for a long time while he or she would not be totally comfortable in exile, however, the person would be able to bear the suffering in exile better than someone who had been dedicated to having all the best things in life. That was why in recent days, during the stock market crash, there were those who committed suicide because they were dedicated to money they lost in the crash. Their dedication was not towards God but towards material things.

In our second reading, in St. Paul’s letter to Timothy, we are given a picture of how to be dedicated to God. St Paul tells us, dedication to wealth and comfort of life, should not be part of our desire; rather, **“righteousness, devotion, faith, love, patience, and gentleness”** should be our life long goals. These are virtues that will get us to eternal life and not eternal damnation. They are the virtues that will open our heart to the suffering of others so we can become the channel of God’s grace and mercy to them.

 In our Gospel reading, Jesus who is always pointing us to the kingdom of God told the Pharisees a parable about a rich man dressed and living like a king. Even though there was a poor, hungry, and suffering man at his door, the rich man ignored him. Even dogs showed mercy to Lazarus by licking his wounds while the rich man blinded by his dedication to wealth and the finest things of life showed him no mercy. Why, because he was not dedicated to God.

Jesus said, when they both died, the poor man was taking up to be with Abraham in the presence of God. The rich man ended up in a life of torment and sorrow in hell. Wanting to be relieved of his pain and torment, the rich man now recognized Lazarus whom he did not acknowledged on earth. He now wanted Lazarus to help him, first to relieve him of his pain, secondly to be sent to warn his brothers not to continue in their ways of indifference to the poor. On both counts Abraham told him no, that they have Moses and the prophets to listen to.

The word of God is a living word and it resonates in our world today. Are we listening to the word of God Jesus passed on to His Apostles who passed them on to us through His Church or do we ignore them as the rich man and his brothers did? If we are listening, do we know how to make good use of the world’s goods or do we keep them to ourselves?

As we come to receive Him in the Eucharist, let us ask Him for increase in faith, hope, and love of God and of our neighbor.