

Are You Not Entertained?

Wednesday of the 24th Week in Ordinary Time

(Obl Mem Sts Cornelius [Pope] and Cyprian [Bishop] [Martyrs])

1 Tim 3:14-16; Lk 7:31-35

As I read today's Gospel, I was reminded of a line from the movie "Gladiator"

Russell Crowe – brought into the Roman Coliseum to face off against six big ogres of men

- With quite the dramatic flair he rather quickly dispatches the six men one by one
- The crowd sat in stunned silence
 - Russell Crowe's character was not supposed to win
 - This was definitely not what they expected
- Then he admonished the crowd
 - "Are you not entertained?!" (x 2)
 - flung his sword up into the VIP gallery
 - Spat on the ground in disgust and walked away

In Luke's Gospel today

- Jesus has a "Russell Crowe moment" with the scribes and Pharisees
 - in their self-righteous piety
 - were rejecting Him
 - just as they had also rejected John the Baptist
- Jesus said they are like children in the marketplace
 - children who would whine when they didn't get what they wanted
 - Do you think I was sent by my Father to entertain you??
 - "We sang a dirge but you did not weep"

- points to John the Baptist who preached a message of repentance
- And when John came to them fasting, signifying remorse
- They said he was possessed by a demon...
- “We played the flute for you, and you did not dance”
 - points to Christ who is the embodiment of the Messiah foretold by John the Baptist
 - but when Jesus came eating & drinking, signifying the arrival of the bridegroom
 - they rejected Him and called him “a drunkard and a glutton”
- Long had the scribes & Pharisees anxiously awaited the Messiah, preceded by the one who would herald Christ’s coming
 - Yet when they arrived, they were rejected...
 - John the Baptist and Jesus Christ were simply not what the scribes & Pharisees had expected.
 - not what they were looking for...
 - Of John the Baptist, perhaps:
 - We don’t like his message; his unsophisticated style; wears camel skins and eats grasshoppers; clearly demon possessed
 - Of Jesus
 - Ehh... he eats too much; drinks too much
 - He doesn’t follow all of our rules
 - hangs out with sinners
 - And he’s quite critical of us...!
 - Definitely not Messiah material...
 - And so they rejected both John the Baptist and Jesus

Easy for us 2,000 years later to look at these scribes and Pharisees

- and say, wow, how foolish! How blind they must've been!
- How could they have rejected John the Baptist
 - whom Jesus hailed as "more than a prophet" and said there was "none greater" than John
- And how could those foolish scribes & Pharisees reject
 - Jesus Christ, the Messiah, True God & True Man, Perfect Revelation of God Almighty

Yes, it's easy for us today to maybe look down our noses at those foolish scribes and Pharisees

- Lord knows WE would certainly never make such a mistake....
- WE would never reject a shepherd sent to us from God...

Well, as the adage goes: "The more things change, the more they stay the same..."

- As your deacon and as your brother
- I say this parish has some soul searching to do....
- Are we really so different from the scribes and Pharisees?
 - So carefully minding all our religious P's & Q's
 - Going to daily Mass; praying the Rosary
 - So careful to follow all the rules...
- And I realize I'm largely preaching to the choir this morning
- But sometimes we seem to think we can
 - window shop God's messages & His messengers...
 - I like this priest's message
 - And this priest's style
 - And this priest's gifts
 - And I like... and I want... and I, and I....
 - And when we don't get what WE want
 - This is not what I expected
 - This is not what I wanted

- This is different
- And we fret....
- And Jesus tells us today that we're acting like spoiled children whining in the market...
- Sometimes it seems that we, in our humanity, can never be satisfied...

Today, as we memorialize

- Pope Cornelius and Bp Cyprian, martyred in the 3rd century
 - for bringing a message from God the world did not want to hear...

Let us pray for our parish, and search our own souls

- That we may humbly, and *gratefully*, accept whatever messages and messengers that God, in His infinite Wisdom & Love sends to us...