

29TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

OCTOBER 16, 2005

MATTHEW 2:15-21

Homily by: Sister Mary Catherine Antczak, OP

The Pharisees in today's Gospel teach us something very important about Jesus. Speaking to Jesus they say, "You are a truthful man. . . and teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. . . You are not concerned with anyone's opinion, for you do not regard a person's status." Can we imagine a world where status doesn't matter?

Status matters a lot. It's conferred by political or social position, wealth and property, educational achievement, media and entertainment success, not to mention family inheritance. Our manner of speaking is filled with the importance of status. We jealously watch some people "climb the social ladder." We like to meet someone with "friends in high places." We pay attention when someone advises us that getting ahead depends on "who you know." A person's status commands attention, makes headlines, earns influence, draws crowds, and makes money. Status brings titles, honors, commemorations, and invitations.

We learn something very different about Jesus. He did not regard a person's status. The Pharisees in today's Gospel tell Jesus that they have observed that what mattered to him was truth: teaching the way of God in accordance with the truth. The truth Jesus preaches and shows us is the inherent dignity and worth of each human being, created in the image and likeness of God.

Can we imagine a world where each person experiences her or his status as a human being made in the image and likeness of God? Dare we dream of a world where boundaries, barriers and blockades that separate humanity into "have's and have not's" would come tumbling down? Doesn't it seem impossible to imagine a world where we would see one another for who we are not what we earn, or where we live, or what the color of our skin is? This is the vision of the Kingdom of God that Jesus proclaimed.

The Pharisees in today's Gospel watched Jesus closely. They knew what Jesus was like. They tell Jesus that they have observed how he pays no attention to status and is intent on teaching God's truth. Undoubtedly, there are many who, like the Pharisees, observe us and how we act because we name ourselves Christians. From our words and actions, would others be able to say to us as they said to Jesus: "You are a truthful person. You seek what God wants, and a person's status does not matter to you." The Gospel today sets before us this challenge to imagine a new world, the Kingdom of God, where all experience the only status that matters: their dignity as sisters and brothers made in the image and likeness of God.