

Second Hand Preacher

23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time

September 6, 2015

James 2:1-5

To discriminate against the poor is nothing new. It happened in biblical times just like it happens today. It is hard work to be poor in the world today. It means making tough choices about where one lives, what one eats, and how one is to make a living. Poverty can be a cycle in families and often the poor have no one to turn to. Jesus and the prophets were champions of the poor. St. Francis and many saints throughout history had a special relationship with the poor. Catholic social teaching talks about a preferential option for the poor that talks about, when looking at a situation, one should give preference to helping the poor. Our current Holy Father loves the poor. Pope Francis has a message to the world that we should all help the poor.

St. James feels the same way about the poor. He sees and questions discriminatory practices within his Christian community. He wants to train them to think about the poor, not just befriend the rich who can help you financially, but be open and loving to all who choose to worship with us. Rather than treating the rich like royalty and the poor like slaves, his community must make a change.

James does not want his people to judge others as that is not our role as Christians. I sometimes say that my job is not to be a judge, but to work in sales. For me, this is more than a clever line. I really feel it is my duty to attract other people to a life with Jesus and this includes the poor. I have a priest friend in Minneapolis who is always around the poor, and I have learned from him about the poor. I have even had an assignment in St. Paul that also put me in direct contact with the poor. I do what I can with teaching, preaching and trying my best at living in the image of Jesus. This road is not easy, but it is totally worth it. I challenge each of us to preach the Gospel. As St. Francis once said, "preach the Gospel always, use words only when necessary."