

WHAT KIND OF TEACHERS ARE WE?

October 31st, 2005

Leader: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. (Invite persons present to pause for a few moments of silent recollection and to offer any special intentions.)

This Sunday's gospel is of particular interest for all of us who are involved in Catholic Education.

Reader: Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples, "The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' chair; therefore, do whatever they teach you and follow it; but do not do as they do, for they do not practise what they teach. They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on the shoulders of others; but they themselves are unwilling to lift a finger to move them. They do all their deeds to be seen by others; for they make their phylacteries broad and their fringes long. They love to have the place of honour at banquets and the best seats in the synagogues, and to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces, and to have people call them rabbi.

"But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all students. And call no one your father on earth, for you have one Father - the one in heaven. Nor are you to be called instructors, for you have one instructor, the Messiah. The greatest among you will be your servant. All who exalt themselves will be humbled, and all who humble themselves will be exalted."

Leader: This gospel leads us to ask an important question: what kind of teachers are we? This question applies not only to those who teach in the classroom but to all of us, for as the Introduction of *Build Bethlehem Everywhere* states, "Catholic Education is part of the mission of the Church, and all Catholics are co-responsible for that mission by the grace of baptism." Are we like the scribes and Pharisees, the kind of teachers whose actions do not correspond to our words? Does the saying, "Don't do as I do; do as I say" describe us? If so, we are more interested in appearing righteous than in actually living righteous lives, and are then no different than those who Jesus criticizes in this gospel.

In the second part of the gospel, Jesus tells us how to avoid this kind of self-righteous posturing: we need to keep in mind our relationship with God and Jesus. God is our Father, the Creator, making us his beloved children formed in his image and likeness. The more we come to know God, ourselves and our relationship with him, the better able we are to lead others to God. And while we are all "teachers" of the gospel by virtue of our baptism, we are always in the position of students as we acknowledge Jesus as our one true Teacher. Just as Jesus came to serve, so too are we to do likewise. In fact, Jesus states that our place in the Kingdom of God will be based on how well we serve our sisters and brothers.

All: Lord Jesus, you say to us, "All who exalt themselves will be humbled, and all who humble themselves will be exalted." Be with us as we continue to develop a deeper and more authentic relationship with you. May our humble efforts to teach your good news through our words and acts of service lead others to you who are the Way, the Truth and the Life. Amen.