Gratitude and Apostleship

**Romans 16: 1-2 (NIV)**

1 I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deaconof the church in Cenchreae.

2I ask you to receive her in the Lord in a way worthy of his people and to give her any help she may need from you, for she has been the benefactor of many people, including me.

The first fifteen chapters of St. Paul’s epistle to the Romans are focused on establishing the faith community among the Romans and his presentation of Biblical doctrines to the Romans. The final chapter concludes with salutations and recommendations as was a tradition during the period.

The two verses for today’s meditation are devoted towards introducing his associate Phoebe. It is assumed that she is the courier of this important epistle to the Romans. We do not see any other references to Phoebe in the Bible.

However, some of the takeaways that we could derive from these verses are:

1. **Gratitude**: The verses says that Phoebe was not only a deaconess but also helped Paul in his mission. Grateful Paul is recommending that Romans provide her with all assistance that she might need during her work in Rome. Paul asks Romans to treat her in a way worthy of his people (In some versions of Bible, Romans are requested to treat her worthy of a saint). Paul goes on to thank a lot of the others through the rest of this chapter.
2. **God’s Messenger**: We do not have details on the role of Phoebe once she was in Rome. But it is clear that she had a part in taking Paul’s epistle to the Romans.
3. **Role of Women in Church**: This is a controversial subject but worthy of meditation. Phoebe is a deacon of the church and Paul asks Romans to treat her worthy of a saint.

As we meditate and pray during this Lent Season, please remember to:

1. Be grateful to Lord for all his blessings and also to the numerous people who through Lord has helped and supported us through various trying times. Let us take some time to tell them of how much we appreciate their support and Love. (*Psalm 107:1* – “Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for he is good! For His mercy endures forever.” *Ephesians 1:16* – “do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers” *1 Thessalonians 5:18* – “In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you”)
2. Meditate and understand that through obedience to the faith and his sacrificial grace we can be his apostles. We might not all be Paul but let us try to meditate and understand how we can grow in faith and be his messenger in whatever capacity we can. (*Romans 1:5* – “Through him we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name”)
3. Pray and ask for God’s help to understand how we should treat and respect women. Paul in the verses above asks Romans to treat Phoebe worthy of a saint. We do not have any mention in our Gospels limiting a women’s role. As we read through the epistles when Bible was interpreted to establish a faith community, we see that there are attempts to define what a woman can or cannot do. This could be based on the cultural limitations, based on our limitation to understand his love and message that “everybody is one under him”. Let us ask God to guide us through this controversial topic.

As we meditate through the rest of the Lent season, let us thank our Lord for his sacrificial grace and asks his guidance to be obedient to the faith so that we can be considered his apostles.