

Commentary on the Gospel for Tue, Jul 9th 2013

The first reading tells us of Jacob wrestling with an angel and of not letting go until the angel blessed him. Jacob is on a journey to meet his brother Esau, whom he had wronged by stealing his birthright, long ago. So Jacob is worried about meeting his brother, how his brother will react, and if he and his family will be safe. It's fair to say that Jacob had much going on in his mind as his journey reaches its climax.

The question that came to me as I read this scripture was "what do I wrestle with, in my life?" Sometimes I wrestle with my need to be productive, so that I can show that I'm a valuable team member. Sometimes I wrestle with my need to be well thought of, so that I can be on other people's 'good guy' list. What I wrestle with says a lot to me about where I am and where I am not letting God's grace transform me. When I wrestle with what I've listed above, I believe that God says to me, "Marty, you are enough just as you are. You are blessed, and graced, and you are invited to live in gratitude for the many gifts you live with." Of course, trying to proclaim the Good News of life and redemption in Christ Jesus our Lord, one might think it would be easy to be aware of the many blessings, graces, and gifts that God has given me. However, I do find that I often get caught up in the busyness of each day or moment and can sometimes fail to reflect on all the goodness and all the gifts that God has blessed me with. My invitation, and our invitation, I believe, is to take time to reflect on what God gives us each day and each moment, and then to be thankful for all that we have.

In the midst of everyday life, we're called to remember that at the end of the passage mentioned above, Jacob is transformed and is to be called "Israel." Just as Jacob was changed, we're called to be transformed in God's love, forgiveness and mercy. I often times don't want to change or be transformed, yet that is my calling and our calling, as those who try to follow Jesus of Nazareth.

In the Gospel from Matthew, Jesus heals the man who is mute and Jesus' heart is moved to pity for the crowds. Jesus shows us by example how we are to behave as his followers. What moves my heart today, and how do I respond to others in need? Do I offer a friendly, non-busy, listening ear? Do I give others the chance to be who they are and where they are, in the way that I am present to them? Can I let myself be transformed by Jesus' example and the call to love all others on this earth? These questions challenge me daily, as they invite me to reflect on how I'm living or not living the faith I proclaim in Christ Jesus our Lord. Let's pray for the grace to be present to others the way that Jesus modeled for us followers – to heal, to proclaim good news, and to be compassionate in our response. Let's be transformed in Jesus and transform our world!

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