

Commentary on the Gospel for Thu, Mar 26th 2015

In the first reading from Genesis and in the Responsorial Psalm, we hear a very powerful message regarding our identity: We belong to God. We are his chosen ones!

In Genesis God made a covenant with Abraham whereby God said he would be the God of Abraham and of all his descendants throughout the ages. In other words, God promises never to abandon us. He is our Father, and each of us is a child of God.

As a child of God, how do we define ourselves? Do we allow status, power, honor, position, material goods, intellect, abilities, etc., to define us and others? Or do we define ourselves and others as belonging to God? When we live as a child of God, we no longer rely on worldly labels for our identity because we allow God to define us. When we allow God to define us, as His chosen ones, we actually have a personal relationship with Him.

Lent is a Liturgical season during which we can make a special effort to devote time to improving our personal relationship with God. When we focus on God, we cannot glorify ourselves; instead, we see ways to serve Him. During Lent we consider ways to use our individual gifts to glorify and serve Him. The Lenten season encourages us to reflect on times when we did not acknowledge ourselves or others as children of God. Lent is a time to forgive and to obtain forgiveness. God so greatly wants a relationship with us. We are His chosen ones, have we chosen Him?

Dear God,

Help me realize the great inheritance of being your child. Guide me to live as your child- as your chosen one. Help me resist identifying myself by status, power and material things. Let me focus on you and help me find ways I can serve you. Through Christ's name, I pray. Amen

March 27, 2015

by Tom Purcell

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[click here for photo and information about the writer](#)

Friday of the Fifth Week of Lent

Lectionary: 255

Jeremiah 20:10-13

Psalm 18:2-3A, 3BC-4, 5-6, 7

John 10:31-42

Praying Lent

Weekly Guide for Daily Prayer

“In my distress I called upon the Lord, and he heard my voice.”

This psalm response comes at a good time for me. It is a reminder to let go of stress before it becomes distress. As we all know, stress from job, relationships, the larger community, life in general can weigh on us and cause us to worry and fret. Stress generally makes most of us uncomfortable, unhappy, and in cases physically and emotionally ill. If left unresolved, or if ignored, over time stress can lead to “distress” and manifest itself in feelings of pain and suffering.

So it is good for the psalmist to remind us that the Lord will hear our voices when we call out in distress. Does the Lord make the stress go away? Not really. If you are stressed because of a job, or financial issues, or a rocky relationship, or if you feel stressed because of poverty, or immigration, or the death penalty, or the threat of war or terror, the Lord doesn't remove those stressors from your life.

So what does the psalmist mean by saying the Lord hears our voices? Is God a sounding board, absorbing all the prayers of humankind, cataloging them in an unimaginably large databank? We share our woes with the Lord – how does that help relieve stress?

One way, I think, is that knowing the Lord hears enables us to have perspective. Our stresses seem pretty large to us as individuals, but are not terribly significant in the grand creation of the universe.

Knowing the Lord listens can provide us with a calming sense of the true insignificance of our current worries.

The Lord also listens by sending us examples of how to handle stresses. Jesus is perhaps the greatest example. He has reminded us of the need to let go of worry – the parable of the birds singing without a care in the world is a beautiful reminder of the grace of detachment from worries and cares. Note also what He does in today's reading from John, challenging the accusers to evaluate the works done in the Lord's name. Jesus rhetorically asks – “How can I not be who I say I am and still perform the miracles that I do?” This causes us to think – what actions do I take and how do people understand who I am by those actions? What can I DO in reaction to the stresses in my life, and how can I make a difference in reducing these concerns? My mother's old saying “God helps those who help themselves” is a reminder that we can reduce stress by acting in concert with God.

The Lord also listens by inviting us to let go of our stresses – to turn them over to the Lord, our rock of refuge. To do this requires us to give up control of our stresses and to let the Lord “own” them. It requires us to have the faith to let go, to believe that the worries of our everyday lives are insignificant in God's wonderful design. Recall a time when a stressor was removed from your life, and the relief you felt. Isn't that what God calls us to do through the psalmist?

So, Lent can be a time when we are reminded of these things – when through our prayer and fasting and good works and repentance we identify the stressors in our lives, when our faith grows so we can turn them to the Lord. Lent reminds us of our dependence on the Lord for all the truly meaningful succor and sustenance of our lives – the peace that comes from reunion with our Creator God by our conscious and faithful surrender to our call from our Lord.

And so my prayer today is that through my Lenten prayer, fasting, good works and repentance, I might receive the grace to surrender my stresses to the Lord and thus live the life God calls me to.

March 28, 2015

by Andy Alexander, S.J.

Creighton University's Collaborative Ministry Office

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Saturday of the Fifth Week of Lent

Lectionary: 256

Ezekiel 37:21-28

Jeremiah 31:10, 11-12ABCD, 13

John 11:45-56

Praying Lent

[Our site on the Martyrdom of Archbishop Romero](#)

[Vatican Radio story of Romero](#)

[Weekly Guide for Daily Prayer](#)

This week we celebrated the 35th Anniversary of the murder of Archbishop Oscar Romero.

He was gunned down while saying Mass on March 24, 1980.

The Vatican has declared him a Martyr for the faith.

But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them,

“You know nothing, nor do you consider that

it is better for you

that one man should die instead of the people,

so that the whole nation may not perish.”

He did not say this on his own, but since he was high priest for that year,

he prophesied that Jesus was going to die for the nation,

and not only for the nation,

but also to gather into one the dispersed children of God.

So from that day on they planned to kill him. John 11

"You can tell the people that if they succeed in killing me, that I forgive and bless those who do it. Hopefully, they will realize they are wasting their time. A bishop will die, but the church of God, which is the people, will never perish." - Archbishop Romero, speaking to a reporter, days before his murder

It is quite wonderful that we celebrate this 35th Anniversary of the assassination of Archbishop Romero in this week before Holy Week. And, today's powerful powerful reading from John's Gospel makes it even more beautiful.

John is clear that the high priest is being prophetic in saying that Jesus will die for the people. But, Caiphas doesn't know what he's really saying. He was thinking of getting Jesus out of the way, so the Roman authorities wouldn't further hassle the people. In fact, Jesus' death set us free - free from the devastating effects of our sin and free from the power of death.

Romero's death was the result of the Salvadoran military's attempt to get rid of him - to silence him. But, his death, the death of a martyr, shed the blood which the Church has always knows is the seed of further faith. His preaching gave the Salvadoran people, and all oppressed people, the hope of the Gospel. His death gave them the confirmation of their faith's power to witness with the voice of blood itself.

As we approach Holy Week, we come with deep awareness and gratitude for the sacrifice of Jesus - for us. And, we give thanks to God for the witness of Archbishop Romero and many other Servants of

God who continue to serve the faith in a way which promotes justice. We can ask for the grace to be anointed this week with greater courage to live the Gospel so that others might see and believe we are Jesus' disciples by the love we have for one another.

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