

Commentary on the Gospel for Fri, Jun 5th 2015

I recall as a child loving the story of Tobit and Tobiah, though I have usually had trouble keeping the names straight. No matter. Perhaps it is because it is a very happy ending kind of story that I liked it so much. And it is today's First Reading.

Tobit's mother, Anna, sits watching for her son to return home. When he arrives, he is not alone. Raphael, the angel, is with him and instructs him to apply medicine from "fish gall" on his blind father's eyes! Tobiah held his father's head firmly and applied the medicine which smarted a bit, yet in a brief time yielded sight! Tobit exclaimed, "I can see you, son. The light of my eyes!"

Next Tobiah prayed joyously thanking God, as one might imagine.

But the fun didn't stop there. Tobit had also been successful in his father's business and in his personal life: he was bringing home a bride, Sarah! Sarah arrived soon. Tobiah addressed her: "Welcome home with blessing and joy. Come in, daughter!"

This story is ripe for prayer, using the method often referred to as "Ignatian Contemplation." The method is known for calling upon the use of imagination, not always a familiar prayer tool for us Westerners.

Here is how it might go: Read the passage: Tobit 11:5-17 a couple of times to familiarize yourself with the content. Seek the help of the Holy Spirit as you consider questions like: What is the weather like? What can you see in the scene? Houses? Trees, dessert, water? Who are the people? How are they dressed? Are there smells? Pleasant, not so pleasant? Whatever occurs to you.

Enter into the scene of the story and see what happens. Become a character or stay yourself and let the scene play out. Especially notice feelings. As the story winds down, thank God for the experience, knowing that you may not determine any "fruit" from the prayer until some later time. Be gentle with yourself, knowing you entered in as you could.