

Commentary on the Gospel for Wed, Jan 20th 2016

Our first reading today is from Samuel and is the classic story of David and the Philistine, Goliath. There is certainly something attractive about a story in which a small, young man takes on and conquers the behemoth Goliath— score one for the little guy!

But I have to admit the story is rather brutal and the last thing I need or even want coming out of the Christmas season and into the New Year is to be reminded of all the violence swirling around us in today's society. So, instead I thought I would relate Samuel's story to the New Year, the resolutions made and possibly already broken, and the battles we must wage in order to allow God to be fully present in our lives. In essence, "Who's my Goliath and how best may I slay him?" Now it's fairly easy to rationalize away why we are not closer to God, and often that involves blaming others, our busy lives, and so forth. However, I wonder if it is more productive to think about the Goliath within, the things we think or do, that keep us from getting closer to God. Is it impatience, intolerance, selfishness, an addiction, or possibly one of the seven deadly sins of lust, gluttony, greed, laziness, wrath, envy, or pride? Reflection will help us to not only discover the enemy we are up against, but also a plan for successfully taking on this battle. Is it scary to confront these "Goliaths?" – sure it is. But keep in mind that although David seemed confident on the outside, I have to think that deep within he had doubts and fears like you and me. So as we attempt to follow through with our commitments to be better and to embrace God more fully, we just have to remind ourselves that God is with us, as He was with David, and that He will keep us safe from harm as we face our Goliaths. Keep in mind, in the end, all it took was a simple sling and a stone to conquer the beast. So what's it going to take for us to conquer our own shortcomings in order to enhance our relationship with the God we love?

In today's Gospel reading from Mark, we witness not only the healing ministry of Jesus, but also his resolve to confront the Pharisees. Mark reminds us that God's message is not about rules or laws, but about doing the right thing at the right time. I think of the many times we are confronted with moral dilemmas large and small. How do we handle them? Do we always do the right thing or do we acquiesce to outside pressures? I know that at times it can be difficult, but Jesus not only teaches us what to do, but to do it despite the consequences. Again, we see the importance of being brave for God is with us.

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