

Commentary on the Gospel for Mon, Jan 28th 2013

We struggle with our inability to live according to our values and norms rooted in our faith experience; we hurt others, offend God, and violate the creation. We experience evil in our world constraining the life of many of our contemporaries, making it impossible for them to reach their individual, social, societal, and spiritual potential; we are often complicit in creating unimaginable suffering on large scales. We often have to ask for forgiveness and “sacrifice” time, energy, and valued items to express our sincere desire to be forgiven by others and our loving God. We often realize that good intentions and sound reasoning is discredited by others assuming the worst and voicing accusations of malice and evil. All of us can think of various examples from our personal lives, our relationships, our work place, and national and international economics and politics.

The response of today’s readings is that such experiences are not the end! The letter to the Hebrews reminds us that the power of evil and sin and the constant need to make up for our failures came to an end with Christ who sacrificed his life for us and the whole creation. The power of evil and sin is broken. “[O]nce for all he has appeared at the end of the ages to take away sin by his sacrifice.” And he will come again “bring salvation to those who eagerly await him.” Christ himself says in today’s Gospel that “all sins and all blasphemies that people utter will be forgiven.” Only one sin cannot be forgiven: blaspheming “against the Holy Spirit,” which basically refers to rejecting God, fully understanding God’s reality and plan. Such a profound denial of God is very unlikely to even exist. Thus, the Gospel simply affirms our belief that all our sins are forgiven. What for a powerful message! We can now use all our energy, talents, and skills to move forward working towards a society, which increasingly resembles the life God envisioned for humanity, a reflection of the heavenly Kingdom.

I deliberately leave my thoughts today general without giving specific examples of what this could mean for us. Instead, I invite everyone to meditate and pray over it. The Church remembers today Saint Thomas Aquinas, an outstanding thinker with an extraordinarily sharp mind. He can inspire our thoughts and prayers and guide us towards a vision of life and society shaped by the Gospel message.

Give me, O Lord

A steadfast heart

Which no unworthy thought can drag downwards;

An unconquered heart
Which no tribulation can wear out;
An upright heart
Which no unworthy purpose may tempt aside.
Bestow upon me also,
O Lord my God,
Understanding to know Thee,
Diligence to seek Thee,
Wisdom to find Thee, and
A faithfulness that may finally embrace Thee;
Through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Alex Roedlach