

## Commentary on the Gospel for Sun, Mar 3rd 2013

Words have great histories. Etymology is the study of such wordistry. Procrastinate comes from the Latin, of course, pro means for or on behalf of, craz means tomorrow and teneo means to hold. See, we hold for tomorrow what is being held out for us to do today. For fun, look up the root meaning of prestige or candidate.

In the Jewish scriptures we read of the names for people and the why or history of their names. Jacob's name was changed to Israel, because he wrestled with God. Simon's name was changed to Peter in the Gospel, because he was to be the Rock.

What's in a name? Jesus' name is a form of Joshua whose name would mean, "He Who Saves His People". You, with your name, live his name as well. We prepare to celebrate the liturgy where we hear the Word and remember his saving us his people. He knows our names and the histories of those names as well.

### REFLECTION

We have in our First Reading for this liturgy an account of God's first of many conversations with Moses. God speaks to Moses from a burning bush which does not consume the bush. Many experts have commented on the symbolism of that. Moses is asked to take off his shoes as he approaches the holiness of God. The Voice tells Moses that God has a good idea. Israel is in slavery over in Egypt and Moses is to go and manage their release.

The Voice identifies Itself as the God of Moses' religious tradition. God is the same God who called Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. So God has presented proper credentials and then presents Moses with his mission. He is to go and talk to the powerful leader of Egypt. Moses responds stating a rather ironical, "Who am I to do such a thing?" So he asks God about what credentials can he present for this conversation with Pharo. God says that Moses should say that I Am Who Am sent you. So we have the naming of partners. I Who Am I is being missioned by I am Who. Moses has a second mission as well and that is to inform the people of Israel that the God of their tradition has released them from slavery and desires that this be a cause for their remembering the "Who Am" who will always be with them.

A number of years ago, in Central America, emails were being sent around the world that the United States, for future military advantages, had caused the earthquakes in Haiti. A few years ago various Christian preachers were saying that the devastating hurricane which caused so much hardship and loss of life in New Orleans was a divine punishment for homosexuality. This is not a recent interpretation of events.

In today's Gospel two historic events, at least historic to the readers of Luke's Gospel, are presented as a backdrop for the use of a parable by Jesus. The people tell Jesus about some who were killed by a falling tower and that others suffered by Pilate's mixing blood with their sacrifices. Jesus reminds them that physical suffering is not caused by sin necessarily, which was the common religious thought at the time. Jesus bends their news back on them. Those others suffered and some died, but those in front of Jesus will certainly suffer unless they repent. To show them that they have time to experience the compassion of God, he relates a picturesque parable.

God had been patient with Israel and brought them slowly to be the fruitful people of the Covenant by bringing them out of slavery and into a fruitful land.

There is a people who have withered as mature produce of God's fidelity. Jesus will minister that love in his incarnate presence within Israel. His time will be their time for repenting from unfruitful, un-incarnate lives themselves.

The parable ends with their being cut away, because of their lack of personal response to Jesus' mission, teaching and his very life. Jesus is the grounds keeper and his time is ours as well. His three years is our whole life's time.

We have these days of Lent for our repenting from the non-life things. We are preparing to renew our own baptisms as well as preparing as a community to welcome into our communities those preparing for entrance during these days as well.

We are invited to repent from those attitudes which are not resulting in blessings, in enlivening, in deepening those around us. I would hope that we in the community would not be a disappointment to those entering our numbers during the Easter Vigil. I ponder of what I would be ashamed at their

discovering about me at the liturgy, at my office, at home. For “shame” we put our hands in front of our faces. For authentic Christian life, Jesus takes away our hands from cover, and in merciful re-cover he urges us to “face” up “face” life, because he has faced us from the Eucharistic Table. We do not advance toward the Altar with hands blocking our countenances, but extend those hands to receive and then extend them as Eucharistic gestures in our lives.

“I will prove my holiness through you, I will gather you from the ends of the earth. I will pour clean water on you and wash away all your sins. I will give you a new spirit within you, says the Lord.” Ez. 36, 23-26

Larry Gillick, S.J.