

Email Guidelines

3rd Week of Lent 09

MONDAY: 16th 2 Kings 5 1-5, Psalm 42, Luke 4 24-30

I found the reading from Kings very thought provoking; Naaman is a very powerful man but suffers from leprosy. It is through the wisdom and advises of a servant girl that he is healed; it is also his servants who point out to him when he is resistant to washing in the Jordan as his pride gets in the way that if he had been asked to something more extraordinary that he would have done it. God is not offering him healing in the dramatic or complicated way he was expecting and it takes the clearer and simpler vision of the servants to help him understand. I know that this is often how I approach God expecting what he is telling me, or how he will work to be complicated and dramatic, it is often dramatic in the sense of producing change, but rarely complicated, we are often the ones who complicate life and our relationship with God. Let's pray for the simplicity that this reading speaks of in relating to God this Lent.

The refrain of the Psalm: *'Thirsty is my soul for the living God. When shall I go and behold the face of God?'* really spoke to me as I was praying. I know it is something we hear a lot within the Verbum Dei community, but it is true that we often become unaware of our thirst for God as it becomes

secondary to dealing with our everyday concerns and the immediate thirsts that the world tells us need to be met. Let's try and really experience our thirst for God and rely on him to quench it rather than looking elsewhere.

The gospel reading refers back to the reading from Kings and we see Jesus provoking a furious response in the people, when he says: *'no prophet is accepted in his own native place.'* Maybe this relates to our own experience of speaking about our faith and trying to share the good news with people that it can be easier with people we maybe don't know so well, but we feel less accepted in our own native place so to speak.

TUESDAY: 17th Deuteronomy 3:25,34-43, Psalm 25: 4-9, Mathew 18:21-35

When I went to a Jewish friend's wedding, the Rabbi spoke about the essence of our relationship being that we can discuss and plead with God and feel that we are truly in relationship with him. in the first reading, that really comes across to me, Azariah is reminding God of all that he has done and his compassionate nature and pleading with him. This idea of really communicating with God and the outpourings of the heart that we see throughout the Old Testament speak to me of a society where people were so much more keenly aware of their reliance on God than we are.

Let's try and deepen in that understanding that although we may feel self sufficient in many ways we need to become more open to God showing us our poverty and need for his grace.

The Gospel reading also talks about forgiveness and compassion; it is a very striking parable. The King's response isn't initially compassionate, but he allows himself to be moved with compassion and forgives the servant his very large debt. However the servant is then unable to do the same over a much smaller amount. The penalty for not forgiving is very harsh which can feel hard to stomach for the modern reader. There is an emphasis on forgiving your brother from your heart, it is not a surface heartfelt forgiveness but genuine heartfelt forgiveness. In today's society we can be very allergic to the idea of guilt and of needing to be forgiven, I think this time of lent is not about wallowing in guilt or self condemnation but really is a time of trying to make a constructive moral inventory or where we need to be forgiven and also where we need to forgive. Even in situations where the other person is unaware of any guilt I think it can be important to forgive them in our hearts if we feel that they have intentionally or unintentionally wronged us. This is the essence of what we say so routinely when we pray *'forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us' in the Lord's prayer*.

WEDNESDAY: Galatians 5:13-26, Psalm 40

Fast from Anger, Feast on patience!

During this time of lent it is not just about focusing on the direction we don't want to go down, but also on focusing on where we do want to go. I love the sense that Paul communicates in the Galatians reading that the Spirit brings freedom. When I taught I often found myself saying to kids and probably making them want to roll their eyes that freedom and rights come with responsibility. Paul is telling us this, with the freedom that we are given we have a choice about how we use it. The two opposites that I want to look at are anger and patience, it can be incredibly easy to get angry or irritated and it can then be incredibly hard work to reestablish communication and to rebuild after that, so let's ask for forgiveness for those occasions where anger has got the better of us. Often the people we remember and who have the biggest impact on us are those who have been patient with us. It can be easy to think of patience as a weak response and of anger as a more powerful effective response at times, but it requires incredible strength and trust in God to remain patient. Let's reflect on how patient God has been with us and continues to be in our journeys of faith and pray for the grace to be able to exercise that patience with people in our lives and circumstances that come our way.

THURSDAY: 2 Samuel 7:4-5a, 12-14a, 16 , Psalm 89:2-3, 4-5, 27 and 29, Romans 4:13, 16-18, 22, Matthew 1:16, 18-21, 24a or Luke 2: 41-51

For those of you like I who are not always fully aware of the liturgical calendar, you may not know that today is in fact the "*Solemnity of Saint Joseph, husband of the Blessed Virgin Mary.*" Bearing this in mind I prayed with the reading from Mathew. I am always amazed by this reading by Joseph's amazing faith and ability to allow God to change his perception entirely and to act according to what he understood from God rather than holding onto how logic and the society around him told him to interpret the situation. It speaks to me very powerfully in this period of Lent as it can be a special time of Grace if we are open to it, where God can change the way we see things and lead us to seeing people and situations with his vision.

Let's pray that as we journey through Lent, we would experience God changing our vision and maybe moving us away from immediate assumptions and interpretations that we have become used to because we look at things through the world's eyes. The only way that our vision can be changed is through prayer and through deepening our relationship with God. Maybe one thing we can ask God is that in this period of Lent he would give us a new and even deeper experience of Him which would mark us and our lives.

FRIDAY: Habakkuk 3: 16- 19; Isaiah 49, 1-6

"Even in the midst of disaster I will hope in the Lord!..."

The reading from Habakkuk illustrates the much more real sense that the Jewish people had of relying on God in times of disaster. In the modern world where we can kid ourselves into believing that we can protect ourselves from disaster, we are less likely to turn to God and to place our hope in him. However, it is moments which we will all experience where problems seem intractable and we seem to have reached the end of our tether and exhausted all possible options that we can come to rely on God and to put our hope in him. If we really have the awareness that God has a purpose for our lives and as Isaiah writes, He '*called me from the womb*' then it can become easier to rely on God and put our hope in him more readily. Let's pray today on asking God to continue the life time's process of being filled with hope by him and learning to believe that even in the midst of disasters we can find our hope in him.

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