

Come back to me!

third sunday of LENT



San Ignacio de Loyola Parish

February 28, 2016

REFLECTION ON THE WORD

Five verbs in today's first reading capture this Gospel challenge to us: repent, retry, reconcile, renew, restore.

We are to repent of our sinfulness; retry the cultivation God constantly does in order for us to be fruitful in our daily living; reconcile with whoever and whatever keeps us from growing; renew our resolve to avoid whatever might cut us off from God; restore any broken relationships hindering our receiving the fullness of Life. Not to accept this challenge to personal transformation is to choose to perish.



What is obvious in these statements is that we choose to perish or live. God gives us all we need and even more so that we can bear fruit. Lent is a reminder that we are prone to sinfulness, but that we are given a chance over and over again to choose Life. The work of Lent is to choose the eternal Life God continuously cultivates within us. Our encouragement is that God is ever patient, ever merciful. God never gives up on us.

Words to reflect upon: personal transformation, choose to perish

First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people,
1 Timothy 2:1

LET US PRAY TOGETHER TODAY for the chronically ill: Sylvia Tasner, Jerry Vega, Fr. Vega, Rudy & Sonia Méndez, **Maggie Maziarz**, and Peter and Leida Fiorito.

pray

Let us pray as a community this week for the thousands of Christians in the Middle East who are being persecuted and killed because of their faith.

CHOOSING-ACTING LENT

The challenge of Lent is urgent: "repent or perish; bear fruit or be cut down". But what does this urgency mean for us common sinful folk? The challenge of Lent is to allow Jesus to "cultivate" and "fertilize" us so that we know of what we are to repent and can begin bearing even more fruit. Heeding the message of the gospels is one way we prune ourselves of sins. The gospels are the measure against which we can examine our daily living. Another way is to pay attention to the people around us. They can reflect back to us behaviors we need to change. Christian living—and repenting—isn't something undertaken in isolation. It always involves other people. They are the "examples" who teach us what needs to change in us so that we can bear fruit—even a bumper crop!

Words to reflect upon: challenge, cultivate, repent

prayer

O God, author of every mercy and of all goodness, who in fasting, prayer and almsgiving have shown us a remedy for sin, look graciously on our efforts and strengthen our resolve to grow more fully into you in this holy season of **Lent** .

A PENITENTIAL PSALM: 51: 1-4, 7-10

Have mercy on me, O God, according to thy steadfast love; according to thy abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquities, and cleanse me from my sin!

"Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me."
Psalm 51:10

Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Fill me with joy and gladness; Let the bones which thou hast broken rejoice. Hide they face from my sins, And blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, And put a new and right spirit within me.

— THE LITURGICAL CORNER

Vatican II gave us a new focus on our identity as the “priesthood of the faithful” and encouraged—really insisted—that as such we learn to take an active, conscious and participatory role in the liturgy. Since the liturgy is now celebrated in a language we can understand we no longer have any excuse for being either strangers or silent spectators at Mass. We are called to a more beautiful participation in the sacred rites, most especially in the prayers.



We would like to suggest that this **Lent**, we make a special effort to pray those most ancient of prayers, the **Psalms**. Clearly, the form of Psalmic speech often falls strangely on modern ears: but remember, it's very old Jewish prayer with a distinctively Jewish shape—the shape of active, protesting suffering but also the shape of defiant, resilient hope.

These prayers present us with certain forms and conditions which are true of all of us and which come to speech in the **Psalms**. Our life of faith consists in moving with God in terms of (a) being securely oriented, (b) being painfully disoriented and (c) being surprisingly reoriented. Thus we can speak of “passages”, the life-cycle and stages of growth. We can be honest about what is happening to us. Most of all, we are provided with a way to think about the Psalms in relation to our common human experience, for each of God's children is in transit along the flow of orientation, disorientation and reorientation.

People are driven to such poignant prayer and song as are found in the Psalter precisely by *experiences of dislocation and relocation*. It is experiences of being overwhelmed, nearly destroyed, and surprisingly given life which empower us to pray and sing at all.

Sounds like a most appropriate prayer form to learn during **Lent**, doesn't it? Let's give it a try...but you'll need to *pick up a missal* to follow the **Psalm** as it is sung by the choir. If you dare to try singing at least the refrain, HOORAY FOR YOU! Remember, we're all in this together. We're a community!

COME BACK TO ME, WITH ALL YOUR HEART!

— Joel 2: 12

GENERAL PARISH EXHORTATION FOR LENT III

The Lord is near to all who call upon him, to all who call upon him in truth. Psalm 145:18

THE PRACTICE OF LENT

Develop an open heart!

Let go of comparing.

Let go of competing.

Let go of judgments.

Let go of anger.

Let go of regrets.

Let go of worrying.

Let go of blame.

Let go of fear.

Have a proper belly laugh at least once a day!
(especially if it's your inability to let go of any of the above)

MERCY-ING

Some suggestions for keeping to mercy during this Holy Year of Mercy:

- Make a point to smile, greet or make conversation with someone you know who would enjoy it.
- Give away something of yours (that you really like) to someone you know who would enjoy it.
- Make a gratitude journal for your spouse and jot down little things he or she does that you're grateful for. Bite your tongue and go write in it (or at least read it) the next time you want to criticize in a moment of frustration.
- Respond to provocation with the respect you wish a person would show you.
- Learn to make an Ignatian “Examine” every night. Remembering God's mercy each night helps us to be merciful.

PURIM

Saturday, March 5th our Jewish friends and neighbors are celebrating the joyous feast of Purim that marks the deliverance from death of the Jewish community that lived in Persia some 2,500 years ago. Special temple services will be held that include the reading of the Book of Esther, the story of how God saved his people through the intervention of Queen Esther with King Ahasuerus who was threatening to annihilate the Jews of his kingdom. **Lent** seems an appropriate time for Christians to take notice of this ancient Jewish tradition of Purim and remember that we also, like the Jews of ancient Persia, have been delivered from death (sin) by that same Savior God.



In this context, you may want to include the Book of Esther with its beautiful ancient recounting of God's faithfulness and care for his people in your **Lenten reading** this week.