

Lent Take-homes Week Three

Monday February 29

Readings: Jeremiah 18:18-20; Matthew 20:17-28

Scripture Verse: 'The son of Man came not to be served but to serve...' Matthew 20:28

Reflection: Unfortunately our history has been marked by the murder of good people such as Mahatma Ghandi and the South American Roman Catholic Archbishop Oscar Romero. Both worked on behalf of the poor. Both worked for peace and justice. Both were killed by people who supported oppressive regimes and were threatened by the idea of change. There have been, in the centuries since Jesus' life, death and resurrection countless other good people who gave their lives while serving the needy and working for a more just and peaceful world. Many times these people's good work was unrewarded. At other times they faced criticism and punishment. Sometimes they were killed.

In our readings for today, we are faced with the cost of discipleship—the cost of being a follower of Jesus in a predominately non-Christian culture and world. If we choose to follow Jesus, we will work for justice and peace, strive to help those who need help and try to respect the dignity and sacredness of every human life. We will be criticized for doing that. We will pay a price for being faithful.

Jesus tells us that his way is a way in which there will be suffering. He tells us his followers will accept this “cup” as part and parcel of life. In Lent we are invited to reflect on the price that comes with following Jesus. We are invited to ask God to help us to drink the cup that Jesus drank.

Tuesday March 1

Readings: Jeremiah 17:5-10; Luke 16:19-31

Scripture Verse: "Blessed is the person who trusts in the Lord, whose hope is in the Lord..." Jeremiah 17:7

Reflection: A few years ago there was a report about a survey that asked people what they would do with the money if they won a lottery. The results showed a focus on things like buying new homes and/or cars, and/or quitting jobs to travel etc. While many said they would also “help out” family members only 2% of those surveyed said they would give any money to a charity.

Over and against this survey we also know that many people are quite generous when supporting charities or are confronted by the needs of others.

The gospel story provides us with a stinging commentary on selfishness, especially when selfishness is characterized by indifference to the plight of the poor by the rich. It provides us with a reminder that the response we make has consequences. It is, to say the least, somewhat sobering to listen to Jesus' warning that if people neglect the less fortunate now, then those people will be neglected in the afterlife.

The message is to do our best to share some of what we have with those who have far less than we do. The message is to recognize how much God has blessed us and to trust in God to continue to bless us as we share. Jeremiah wrote: If we trust in humans we become a desert. If we trust in God we become a fountain."

In Lent we are invited to remember that "*all that is in the heavens and on the earth are thine...all things come from thee*" 1 Chronicles 29;10,11 and that we are trusted to use some of what God has given us to help those who need help..."*of thine own have we given thee*". 1 Chronicles 29 ;14 We can ask God to help us to be grateful for all God has given us and to help us to use these gifts to help others.

Wednesday March 2

Readings: Genesis 37:3-4, 12-13, 17-28 Matthew 21;33-43, 45-46

Scripture Verse: The stone which the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. Matthew 21:42

Reflection: Dr. Alfred Adler, a renown family therapist, grew up wanting to be a tailor. But early in his life, he was struck by a severe eye ailment that prevented him from seeing well enough to pursue the tailoring profession. Instead he began to use his "eyes" to gaze into the hearts, minds and spirits of patients and families and, in the process, founded a well-respected school of psychology.

In today's reading from Genesis, Joseph, a dreamer abandoned by his brothers, used his gifts to bring his people to Egypt and begin the process of forming them into a nation. In the gospel, Jesus is the son who is killed but God raises him up to become the foundation of a new redeemed reconciled life for all people.

We too are to use the gifts and talents God has given each one of us and to allow them to shape our lives as followers of Jesus.

Thursday March 3

Readings: Micah 7:14-15, 18-20; Luke 15:1-3, 11-32

Scripture Verse: Let us eat and celebrate because this son of mine was dead and has come back to life. Luke 15:23-24

Reflection: How many times have you heard or said the words “Grow up!” or “Act your age!”. These words might have been directed to you when you were a child and an adult thought you should have been acting more responsibly. Or perhaps you have heard yourself saying these words to children. One task of children is to grow up and become adults, to leave the parental nest and establish a life of their own.

In Jesus’ parable today, we hear the story of a child who took his inheritance, left home and tried to establish himself as an adult. The highlight of the story comes when the “adult” returns home.

The spiritual journey that Jesus presents to us in this parable involves the fact that we are God’s children. People are never too old...we are always a child of God and regardless of where we might wander and how we may botch things up...we can “come to our senses” and be welcomed back into the family.

Micah correctly points out in the first reading that there is no one like our God who removes all our guilt and pardons all our sins.

Lent is a time to return to God and take our place as God’s children—a time to repent and return to the Lord. It is a time to open our heart to God and to accept his forgiving love.

Friday March 4

Readings: 2 Kings 5:1-15; Luke 4: 24-30

Scripture Verse: Now I know that there is no God in all the earth, except in Israel. 2 Kings 5:15

Reflection: Saint Lawrence was a deacon in the 3rd century AD. It was a time of persecution and Deacon Lawrence was informed that the government wished to sell all the treasures of the Christian churches. The governor commissioned Deacon Lawrence to gather all the treasures into one church building so that the governor could have his pick before the sale began. When the governor arrived at the appointed church, he found the worship space filled with the weak, the blind, the lame and the sick. Deacon

Lawrence told the governor, "These are the treasures of the church." Deacon Lawrence was executed (martyred) for this act of Christian witness.

Our readings for today invite us, among other things, to reflect on the reality that we are a healing church. The healing tradition—from Elisha in our first reading... to Jesus... to two thousand years of Christian tradition... to us today—is carried out today through our pastoral care, our care for one another, our care for the people we encounter in daily life, our care in hospitals, retirement/nursing homes, our outreach and most importantly our prayers. As Christians we believe in God's healing love. We offer ourselves as instruments of that healing love.