



## Fr. Daniel's Corner

### Mass Moment: Part 10

#### The Old Testament Reading:

The first reading is usually from the Old Testament (except during the Easter season). In it we recall the origins of our covenant. The first reading relates to the Gospel selection and will give background and an insight into the meaning of what Jesus will do in the Gospel (always watch out for a connecting theme between the two). The Old Testament is a vast collection of theological traditions developed during a period of well over a thousand years. Despite the differences of the many human circumstances and authors reflected there, it is not difficult for anyone who reads with faith, to see that the collection as a whole, leads to a center. With an eye of faith, we will see that everything rotates around the great EXODUS, the wandering in the desert, the coming into the Promise Land. All things either lead to that, recount that, or look back to that. The whole of revelation for Israel is focused on what God manifested himself to be in these events. Every subsequent generation remembered and celebrated them, defined their present dealings with God in reference to them.

When a passage from this collection is read at Mass, now in virtue of Jesus' Resurrection, that original event becomes the event of the community that hears it. We listen and hear it with the insight given it by the presence of the Risen Lord. Just like the two disciples going to Emmaus (Lk 24:27), the mystery of God's salvation becomes meaningful in Christ: "beginning, then, with Moses and all the prophets, Jesus interpreted for them every passage of the scripture which referred to him." From this we learn that it is the Lord himself who teaches the center of Israel's scripture, not as an outside interpreter, but as prophet and Messiah sent to the nation, he himself a part of the nation. And that center is this: that the Messiah-Jesus himself- must suffer to enter into glory.

We are a community of Jesus' disciples in listening to his Words at Mass. We are daily conformed to him by hearing his Word. The story of the community and each person's story find shape and pattern in the central story, Jesus' story. If Jesus' story is the Cross and Resurrection, then, it becomes ours too. The Word proclaimed penetrates the minds and hearts of the gathered assembly and mysteriously begins to shape each and all together into his pattern of suffering and glory. Therefore, it is essential to actively listen to the readings at Mass. The event of the old is recreated, made anew because the Word is ever new. We do not leave our lives and our moment in history behind as we listen to these stories from the past. In fact, the story of our lives is seen to be part of a larger story - the story that the Bible tells.

For example, in the original *creation* the whole world is likened to God's *temple*. Sin destroys our capacity to live in the *world* as in God's *temple*, but the covenant with *Abraham* and *Moses*, again, moves the story forward to building a temple in *Jerusalem*, where God's *presence* in our midst is known and celebrated. Already this echoes the God-with-us, Jesus, who pitched his tent among us and brought a renewed understanding of the *temple*. By his *death* Jesus mysteriously destroyed the *temple* and by his *rising* restored a *new temple*, his glorified *body*. We share in this story as the *temple* built of living stones (cf. Acts 17:24-25, 1 Pt. 2: 4-6).

Aware of this great story of salvation, it is therefore a great privilege and grace to be an instrument through which the holy and life-giving Word of God is announced in the assembly; that is, to be a lector. If all readers (lectors) are more conscious of this, the more effectively the Word will be proclaimed. His or her own understanding and faith *must and ought* to reflect this. In addition, the reader's life witness, and not only mere rhetorical technique, makes for effective reading.

*And that is your Mass Moment for the week.*