

2021 February 21

First Sunday of Lent

Reading:

First: Genesis 9.8-15, "I am establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you." (9)

The Psalm: 25, "Make me know your laws, O Lord, teach me your paths ." (4)

Second: 1 Peter 3.18-22, "Christ suffered for sins once for all...in order to bring you to God." (18)

The Gospel: Mark 1.12-15 "The kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news." (15)

The fatal and the Blessed Sin!

Thinking along Einstein's theory, 'every action has a reaction', we may say, 'every fatality has a blessing.' It may seem strange. St. Peter reminds us today that Christ's suffering for sin brought humanity to God. St. Augustine called the original sin of the first parents, "*Beata Culpa*" meaning **O blessed fault!** Augustine's feeling good about the first sin was because of the plenitude of Grace that was brought about by Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of the world. Only because there was the first/original sin that Jesus Christ, the only Begotten Son of God, took birth on earth as a human person. The fallen and corrupted flesh of humans was infused with divinity. We call this our time, after the coming of Jesus, the period of grace.

St. Augustine visualizes this period as much superior and sublime compared to the period of the fallen state before of the coming of Christ. In his feeling of being bathed in Grace, especially after his conversion from the sinful life style, Augustine forgets or it becomes unfathomable for him, just because he, and we too, did not have an experience of it, that Adam and Eve, before the fall, were in a state of fullness of Grace. They were just in the household of God, the Holy Trinity. God created them in their (Trinity's) image and likeness.

The covenant of God with Noah after the flood was, '*the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh.*' (Genesis 8.11) In Christ Jesus that covenant was renewed as '*humanity will never be totally deprived of grace*' that is, God's love. In other words, God will never deny that humans are his beloved sons and daughters. That is what Jesus means when he said, "*The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near.*" The words of Jesus, "Repent and believe in the good news," simply means, 'grab and appropriate the kingdom.'

There is a clearly drawn graph/map to work out this process of appropriation. That is the way Jesus travelled from the manger at Bethlehem to the cross on Calvary in Jerusalem. From the time of our baptism onward we are on this route. Every year, by going through the liturgical cycle, we cover miles and miles in this journey. As we progress on this way the brightness of the light that we are following should grow and glow brighter on us. The best time in the cycle to intensify this glow and to have a clear vision of the light is the season of Lent. We are already in it. Allow the light shine on us and let us rise and shine in its glow!

Isaiah reveals the mind of God presenting a road map for Lent, which we heard from last Friday's reading: "*Is not this the fast I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house, when you see the naked, to cover them?*" (Isaiah 58. 6-7)

Fr. George

(The readings of the day are given at the beginning. The numbers in parentheses refer to the quotes from them. Good to go through the readings beforehand to properly understand the Reflections)

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