

2021 March 14

Fourth Sunday of Lent

Reading:

First: *II Chronicle 36.14-17a,19-23, "All the days that it lay desolate, it kept Sabbath, to fulfill seventy years." (21b)*

The Psalm: 137, "How could we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land?" (4)

Second: *Ephesians 2.4-20, "By grace you have been saved through faith." (8a)*

The Gospel: *John 3.14-21, "The one who believes in him is not condemned." (18a)*

God begins and completes

Today's readings show that God takes the first step to save man even when human's wander away from God and in spite of one's sinfulness for long periods of time. In the first reading from the Chronicles we find that God masterminded sending Israelites to exile in order to make them aware of their sinfulness and their abandoning God, their protector. In the seventy years they had been on exile they had the time and willingness to look into their own past in which God was their protector and provider. During this sojourn they realized that they had the best of their life when they remained faithful to God and enjoyed his providential care. This realization enabled them to convey the good news of those times to their progeny. As God designed, all those who were deported to Babylon died in exile. Only their offspring survived to return to their ancestral land. The Lord himself settled them there with the same care he had for Israel before they were exiled.

St. Paul tells the same story when he states that while we/they, the Israelites, were dead through our/their trespasses, God made us/them alive through Christ. It was not our merit but the grace of God that made our salvation possible. God continuously work to save the world, his children through the Redeemer, who is the second person of the Trinity ever present as the Word of God and involved in the redeeming work of God. St. Paul continues to narrate a few other good things God did and continues to do to us.

Jesus makes it very clear in his dialogue with Nicodemus that God sent his Son, (himself), to the world not to condemn it but to save it. In all these scripture passages, old and new, it is God who takes the first step. It is God's desire and design that man must be saved. Even when we humans wander away from God in defiance, in sinfulness, in rejecting God's love, in rebellion against God, in human pride and ignorance, God is after us. We may, and we do, forsake God; but God can never forsakes us. We are likely to forget the fact that we are God's children. But God cannot, and does not even for a moment, forget that we are his children. That is the reason God always accompanies us wherever we are, whatever we do including our rejecting God.

This is the merciful God Pope Francis wants to show to us all the times he interacts with people. This mercy of God prompts the Pope to invite us to be merciful and compassionate to the humanity which is less privileged than we are. In the sight of the world, of us, they may be deprived of all privileges here on earth, but in the eyes of God they are the privileged ones. It will be always and forever beneficial for us to befriend these non-privileged ones in order that we may be with them in their privileged existence forever in the company of God and his angels.

(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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