



Come and See!

October 8, 2017

The Word...

Brothers and sisters: Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God. Then the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Then the God of peace will be with you.
(from Phil 4:6-9)

Pondering the Word ...

Have you ever experienced the feeling of really doing God's will? Maybe it was saying or doing *exactly* the right thing for a relative or friend. Perhaps it was finding out about a positive impact you had without being aware of it. You feel a sense of peace--not pride, not a feeling of accomplishment or success, but peace. You are aware that you were nothing more (or less) than a channel for God's love. It's an amazing feeling!

The Old Testament and gospel readings today are harsh, but wedged in between the dire warnings is this beautiful passage from St. Paul that describes a life of peace, free of anxiety, if we choose to live in Christ. Too often we focus on the bad things that could happen if we don't live according to God's rules rather than on the peace that living in the Light brings. I imagine we all remember, perhaps in vivid detail, times when we rejected God. If we've been unable to accept God's forgiveness or forgive ourselves, those negative feelings endure as well.

In reality, heaven and hell are right here, right now. We can choose to live in God's peace or we can opt to reject God and his mercy, and struggle in anxiety and fear. Remember Moses' words to the Israelites before they entered the Promised Land. It is our choice.

*"I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse.
Choose life...by loving the Lord, your God, heeding his voice, and holding fast to him."*

(Deut. 30 19-20)

Living the Word...

Think and pray today about what gets in the way of living your life in the peace of God. Do you have unrealistic expectations of what life should be or how others should act? Expectations not grounded in our ever-changing reality are the major source of anxiety in our lives. Maybe you are holding on to the past in unhealthy ways. Pray the Holy Spirit will guide you to choose life by letting go of things that block the Light of heaven from shining on your life.

Personal Reflections and Ideas: _____

Oct 9: *Still the men rowed hard to regain the land, but they could not... "We beseech you, O LORD, let us not perish for taking this man's life"...they threw (Jonah) into the sea, and the sea's raging abated. Struck with great fear of the LORD, the men offered sacrifice and made vows to him. (Jn 1: 1-16; 2: 1-2, 11)*

We don't always get to hear all the details of Jonah's perilous voyage. The mariners with whom Jonah is traveling are not Jews. When the storm arises, each cries out to his own god. Jonah fesses up and tells them to throw him into the sea, yet they continue to row hard towards shore. Even when, in desperation, they throw him over, they ask Jonah's God for mercy, and when the storm abates they make vows to God. One could argue they came to believe out of awe and fear, but it is Jonah's sin and his willingness to take responsibility that bring them to encounter God. Our goodness and obedience can lead others to God, but often it is instead our repentance and faith, despite our sinful nature, that can be the one thing that invites people to believe.

Oct 10: *Jonah began his journey through the city, and had gone but a single day's walk when the people of Nineveh believed God. (Jn 3:1-10) "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and worried about many things." (Lk 10:38-42)*

Ever wonder how certain stories get paired up in the Lectionary? What in the world does Jonah have to do with Martha and her busyness? I don't know the official answer, but one thing strikes me: God is asking both of them to look at things differently. Jonah fails to see how God can be present to the Ninevites. He assumes God's mercy will not be available to them. Martha assumes she knows exactly what she (and therefore her sister) is supposed to do, so much so that she ignores the presence of God right in front of her. We may need God to shake us up as well, to surprise us into changing our perspectives on other people or on what God is calling us to do. Assuming we know what God wants can get us into big trouble. Pray each morning for the grace to recognize God in others and to listen to how God is calling us.

Oct 11: *"And should I not be concerned over Nineveh, the great city, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand persons who cannot distinguish their right hand from their left?"(Jn 4:1-11)*

Many Old Testament stories portray an image of a vengeful God, but there are several, like the one today, which are enlightening and reassuring. God has been merciful to Jonah, but here, God chastises him for his selfishness and lack of mercy. God is teaching Jonah by calling him out on his own hypocrisy and preconceived notions. God also shows great love and patience for the Ninevites who, out of ignorance, can't distinguish right from wrong. This reading calls me to confront the times I am judgmental of people whose background and upbringing never exposed them to morality, when I fail to acknowledge God's mercy for me, or when I refuse to show mercy to others. Spend time in prayer reflecting on this important lesson.

Oct 12: *"Ask and you will receive; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives; and the one who seeks, finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened." (Lk 11:5-13)*

"If you had the choice, which would you choose:

the granting of your petition or the grace to be peaceful whether it is granted or not?"

(from Taking Flight, by Anthony de Mello)

Oct 13: *"Every kingdom divided against itself will be laid waste and house will fall against house." (Lk 11:15-26)*

This passage comes up several times in the lectionary cycle. Indeed, the divisions in many countries appear more pronounced these days. Perhaps it is just that we hear so much more about it now, but the seriousness of this message cannot be overstated. Pope Francis calls us to dialogue. Not Twitter or Face Book, but face-to-face, civil, respectful dialogue with those whose views are different from our own. This is the only way we can free ourselves from the echo chambers of social and mainstream media and break through to common ground. How will I facilitate dialogue today? How will I reach out to someone whose ideas differ from mine?

Oct 14: *"Crowd upon crowd in the valley of decision; near is the day of the LORD in the valley of decision. (Jl 4: 12-21)*

"The valley of decision" is a provocative phrase. St. Ignatius of Loyola, in his rules for discernment, advises us not to make major decisions in times of darkness, so if you are in the darkened valley of depression or anxiety, look up towards the Light. Pray for patience and wisdom. Seek counseling to help you move forward.