

Doing God's Will



I. A LOOK AT THE THREE READINGS

FIRST READING (Gn 3:9-15)

⁹AFTER THE MAN, Adam, had **eaten** of the tree, the LORD God called to the man and asked him, “Where are you?” ¹⁰He answered, “I heard you in the garden; but I was afraid, because I was naked, so I hid myself.” ¹¹Then he asked, “Who told you that you were naked? You have **eaten**, then, from the tree of which I had forbidden you to **eat!**” ¹²The man replied, “The woman whom you put here with me—she gave me fruit from the tree, and so **I ate it.**” ¹³The LORD God then asked the woman, “Why did you do such a thing?” The woman answered, “The serpent tricked me into it, so **I ate it.**”

¹⁴Then the LORD God said to the serpent: “Because you have done this, you shall be banned from all the animals and from all the wild creatures; on your belly shall you crawl, and dirt shall you **eat** all the days of your life. ¹⁵I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will strike at your head, while you strike at his heel.”

FOCUS: Eating the Forbidden Fruit

COMMENTARY

- This pericope is traditionally interpreted as the Fall of Man or the Expulsion from Eden. The man and the woman have eaten of the forbidden fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden, the fruit of the knowledge between good and evil. When they have eaten it, they do not die, but only their “eyes are opened. And they realize they are naked (v. 7) so that when they hear that the Lord God walks in the garden at the breezy time of the day, they hide from God among the trees of the garden (v.8) Thus the reason why God is calling them.
- V. 9 reveals a Lord God who looks for the lost ones or the ones who are hiding from him.
- In v. 10, the Hebrew word for naked is also the same as “cunning.” So there is a play of word here. The serpent is said to be the most cunning of all wild animals (v.1). But they do not become wise; they realize they are naked, and they sew fig leaves together and make loincloths for themselves (v.7). They realize their separation from God.
- As soon as God hears this he does not immediately judge them, but still asks why? And the answers that follow are a series of looking for scapegoats: from the man to the woman to the serpent.
- The punishments of the snake, the woman and the man, have a double aspect: one

affecting the individual and the other affecting a basic relationship. But this reading ends with the punishment of the serpent: cursed he is as well as the ground, but never the man and the woman. The serpent will crawl and eat dust and there will be enmity between the offsprings of the serpent and the woman's.

- “He” in v. 15 actually refers to both man and woman collectively (NABRE, for example, uses “they”). But for Christians, the woman is the one depicted as striking the snake with her heel and the snake strikes back at her heel. This is because traditional interpretation as early as 130 AD-200, Irenaeus of Lyons means the Mother of the Messiah. But also because Mary is the exemplar of the church which continues to realize the defeat of the devil as seen in Wis 2:24, Jn 8:44; Rev 12:9, which is very near to the Jewish interpretation that Israel, Chosen People, is the one who will pave the way for the Messiah of the world.

REFLECTIONS

If you look closely at the immediate context of the text, you would find out that the ones who are cursed by the Lord God are the ground and the snake. The humans are spared but nevertheless punished by their disobedience. So we really pay for the consequences of our disobedience, the hard way. To be learned and wise is to go through even the experience of alienation. And apart from God, wisdom is not attained.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM (Ps 130)

WITH THE LORD, THERE IS MERCY,
AND FULNESS OF REDEMPTION.

SECOND READING (2 Cor 4:13—5:1)

BROTHERS AND SISTERS: ¹³Since we

have the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, I believed, therefore I spoke, we too believe and therefore we speak, ¹⁴knowing that the one who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and place us with you in his presence. ¹⁵Everything indeed is for you, so that the grace bestowed in abundance on more and more people may cause the thanksgiving to overflow for the glory of God. ¹⁶Therefore, we are not discouraged; rather, although our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. ¹⁷For this momentary light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, ¹⁸as we look not to what is seen but to what is unseen; for what is seen is transitory, but what is unseen is eternal. **5** ¹For we know that if our **earthly dwelling**, a **tent**, should be destroyed, we have a **building** from God, a **dwelling** not made with hands, eternal in heaven.

THE FOCUS: With God in the Abode that is Eternal

COMMENTARY

- The context of this Reading is the description of Paul about the paradox of his and our ministry when we devote ourselves to God— there are trials and persecution but we will rise with Jesus; we who live with Jesus are constantly being given to death for the sake of Jesus (2 Cor 4:11). It is manifested in our bodies like a fragile earthen vessel containing a priceless treasure. No wonder v. 13 speaks about this “same spirit of faith.”

- Vv 13-15 affirm the belief in a God who has raised Jesus to life and in turn will raise us up with Jesus. We are united with the Father and the Son.

- V. 16 again affirms the paradox of the ministry. Paul is not discouraged even if the human body is failing. The outer self refers to the individual subject of ordinary perception and observation; in contrast, the inner self is the interior and hidden self which undergoes renewal. Paul's experiences of little “dying's

“ from the very start of his ministry connects him to Jesus’ life. And this is recognized only by the faith (2 Cor4:13,18; 2 Cor 5:7)

• V5.1 serves as a conclusion of this paradox. Our union with God, but also serves as introduction to the whole section on the future destiny of a faithful disciple of the Lord.

REFLECTIONS

Similar to the First Reading, the stress is on our union with the Lord which ultimately leads us to our eternal union with God— a heavenly reality. And as this must be felt in our daily life, we have to recognize in the eyes of faith the seeming tension we feel the living out of our being a Christian: though we give and love, we are never wanting for we will be replenished and loved too. Though we die to our selves as we share our lives and resources with others, we gain life with Christ; we are renewed by Christ.

GOSPEL READING (MK 3:20-35)

²⁰JESUS came **home** with his disciples. Again the crowd gathered, making it impossible for them even to eat. ²¹When his relatives heard of this they set out to seize him, for they said, “He is out of his mind.” ²²The scribes who had come from Jerusalem said, “He is possessed by Beelzebul,” and “By the prince of demons he drives out demons.”

²³Summoning them, he began to speak to them in parables, “How can Satan drive out Satan? ²⁴If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. ²⁵And if a **house** is divided against itself, that **house** will not be able to stand. ²⁶And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand; that is the end of him. ²⁷But no one can enter a strong man’s **house** to plunder his property unless he first ties up the strong man. Then he can plunder the **house**. ²⁸Amen,

I say to you, all sins and all blasphemies that people utter will be forgiven them. ²⁹But whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never have forgiveness, but is guilty of an everlasting sin.” ³⁰For they had said, “He has an unclean spirit.”

³¹His mother and his brothers arrived. Standing outside they sent word to him and called him. ³²A crowd seated around him told him, “Your mother and your brothers and your sisters are outside asking for you.” ³³But he said to them in reply, “Who are my mother and my brothers?” ³⁴And looking around at those seated in the circle he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers. ³⁵For whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother.”

THE FOCUS: In the House of God, doing His Will

COMMENTARY

- Earlier in Mk3:13-14, we see Jesus go up the mountain and summon those whom he wants and they come to him. He appoints the twelve (who he also named apostles). And the apostles follow Jesus in their mission, and so when Jesus comes home, this opposition against his ministry is inserted in the narrative to show a great contrast.
- V. 20 says, He is home and dines with the crowd and because of this, his relatives think he is out of his mind. What ever that means, it must refer to this extraordinary thing they observe in the ministry of Jesus. The next v.22 shows some say, “He is possessed by Beelzebul,” and this is said about Jesus not by the relatives but by the scribes who came from Jerusalem. So this account of the unbelieving scribes is inserted here, the very reason Jesus has

to answer through parables.

- There are two accusations leveled against Jesus: 1) that he is possessed by unclean spirit and 2) by the prince of demons he drives out demons. And this is answered by the parable: Satan cannot divide himself; he will just self-destruct.
- The first accusation gives rise to Jesus instruction about the sin against the holy Spirit as an everlasting sin in vv 28-30. If they attribute the Spirit in Jesus who is the holy Spirit as Satan, the power of evil, they fall into an everlasting sin, Much more because they offend not just Jesus, but the holy Spirit whom they malign as the source of evil. The other statements of blasphemies may be forgivable, like just denying God or the holy Spirit, but pushing on with malice, one even says the holy Spirit is the source of evil, one’s sin is everlasting, Jesus emphatically points out!
- The next scenario is the coming of his mother and brothers (vv. 31-35). “Brothers” here in semitic understanding, means not only applied to children of the same parents, but to nephews, nieces, cousins, half brothers and half-sisters (cf Mk 6:3). But even if we only restrict the brothers and sisters to really just mean the siblings of the Lord, Jesus actually is emphasizing about the reality of blood relations vis-avis doing God’s will—we are all brothers and sisters of the same Father whom we obey, whose will we will realize in our lives.

REFLECTIONS

Doing the will of the Father, not only recognizes that He is our Father, the maker of all— we all come from him, but also affirms that we are brothers and sisters, and that we need to treasure these relationships we have:

the divine and the human.

II. TYING THE THREE READINGS TOGETHER TO DEVELOP YOUR HOMILY/SHARING

The First Reading talks about how the disobedience of our fore-parents separates them from God, but still God searches for them.

The Second Reading reminds us that the death and resurrection of Jesus has made us united with God that in the eyes of faith our daily undertaking is meaningful in a paradoxical way, life when dying to our selfish selves when we share; death unto Christ as we share our lives with others.

The Gospel Readings brings in the role of the Spirit in our quotidian life. When we obey God’s will, we are united to the Father and the Son and the Spirit, and we acknowledge that we are brothers and sisters and thus reach out to them.

III. OUR CONTEXT

1. Having celebrated, the Solemnity of the Holy Trinity, can you recall moments when the Trinity has inspired you or your community to be more loving, more understanding?
2. In what way is faith instrumental to our unity in the Father, Son and Spirit?
3. Jesus was not daunted by the comments and gossips hounding his ministry? Did you feel moments when your ministry was also tested? How did you cope it?

-Prepared by Br. Hansel B. Mapayo, SSP

