

Liberation from Our God



I. A LOOK AT THE THREE READINGS

FIRST READING (Jer 31:7-9)

Exhortation to rejoice

⁷For thus says the LORD:/ **Shout with joy** for Jacob,/ exult at the head of the nations;/ proclaim your praise

The reasons:

and say: / The LORD has saved his people,/ the remnant of Israel.^e / ⁸Look! I will bring them back/ from the land of the north;/ I will gather them from the ends of the earth./ Pregnant women, together with those in labor—/ an immense throng—they shall return.^f

The tragedy

⁹With weeping they shall come,/

Consolation

but with compassion I will guide them;/ I will lead them to streams of water,/ on a level road, without stumbling./ For I am a father to Israel,/ Ephraim is my firstborn.^g

but with compassion I will guide them;/ I will lead them to streams of water,/ on a level road, without stumbling./ For I am a father to Israel,/ Ephraim is my firstborn.^g

FOCUS: To Rejoice

COMMENTARY

- V. 7 calls for exhortation in a parallel manner (shout with joy // exult // proclaim your praise)
- V. 7 states the reasons for rejoicing: Has delivered

- V. 8 talks of the promise: I will bring them back; I will gather; they shall return.
- V. 9a recalls the tragedy, the Babylonian Exile.
- V. 9b resumes the promise: I will console; I will guide; I will lead.
- V. 9c introduces who is talking, God: the father of Israel.

FURTHER COMMENTARY:

- Jeremiah prophesied before and at the time of the Babylonian Exile.
- The Babylonian Exile had devastating effect on the prophet himself and other pious Israelites who loved the city of Jerusalem.
- It was a tragedy: disruption of the Temple worship; disruption of the economic and social activity; humiliation of the Israelites who were proud of their God who “protects”, the powerful one dwelling in the Temple was not “powerful” enough.
- It was a time of soul searching.
- The text addresses to people looking for explanation and salvation. God through the prophet gives hope and consolation.
- God still loves the people of Israel. He will bring them back to where they belong.

REFLECTIONS

We should not have illusions that all will be well if God is with us and his temple is securely standing. It depends.

The presence of God or his temple does not assure salvation if we do not listen to his voice, speaking through the prophets.

The Israelites had long played politics so much at the time of impending disaster (conquest of the Babylonians). The people rather trusted in themselves, asking help from the Egyptians, rather than from God.

In times of confusion and impending disaster, where do we turn to? To whom do we put our trust?

Now when we fail to trust in God and we are “punished” for it, we are still enjoined by the text that we place our trust in his consoling words and promises:

God will bring us back... God will lead us... God will guide us... God is the God of salvation; a loving Father to his children (his first-born)

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

(Ps 126:1-2, 2-3,4-5, 6)

THE LORD HAS DONE GREAT THINGS FOR US; WE ARE FILLED WITH JOY.

SECOND READING (Heb 5:1-6)

The OT High Priest

¹* Every **high priest** is taken from among men and made their representative before God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. ²He is able to deal patiently* with the ignorant and erring, for he himself is beset by weakness ^{3a}and so, for this reason, must make sin offerings for himself as well as for the people. ^{4b}No one takes this honor upon himself but only when called by God, just as Aaron was.

The High Priesthood of Christ

^{5c}In the same way, it was not Christ who glorified himself in becoming **high priest**, but rather the one who said to him: “You are my son;/this day I have begotten you”;^{6d}just as he says in another place:^e“You are a priest forever/according to the order of Melchizedek.”

FOCUS: On The High Priesthood (Of Christ).

COMMENTARY

- Vv. 1-4 talk about the high priesthood of the Jewish religion: taken from men; representative before God
- Purpose: To offer gifts and sacrifices for sins; deals patiently with the ignorant and erring; makes sin offerings for himself and for the people
- God gives him honor (v.4).
- Vv. 5-6 talk about the high priesthood of Christ.
- Functions like the OT high priest.
- God ordained him.
- The God who ordained him is the one who declares him his son, priest for ever...

MORE COMMENTARY

- The high priesthood has been abolished since the destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem AD 70.
- The author was writing his letter (treatise) long after AD 70. Judaism has been re-invented by the rabbis and Christianity has developed since then.
- He is just making use of the OT high priesthood to explain the high priesthood of Jesus Christ.
- By the way, it is only in Hebrews that Jesus is acknowledged explicitly as high priest. No other NT writing says Jesus is a high priest.
- The two known high priests in the NT, during Jesus’ time, are Annas and Caiaphas. In the Hellenistic times, Onias III was the last legitimate high priest. He was replaced by those who defeated the Greeks, the Hasmoneans.

REFLECTIONS

Jesus is compared to a high priest in OT.
Jesus’ priesthood comes from God, like that of OT high priesthood.

The text makes us appreciate the high priesthood of Jesus Christ: He offers sacrifices for our sins, is patient with us, sinners. He shares in our weaknesses (except sin).

Jesus Christ as a high priest is reachable, approachable and can understand our weaknesses.

He cannot reject those who approach him.

GOSPEL READING (Mk 10:46-52)

Setting

^{46*} They came to Jericho. And as he was leaving Jericho with his disciples and a sizable crowd, Bartimaeus, a blind man, the son of Timaeus, sat by the roadside begging.

The Blind Man

⁴⁷ On hearing that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, “Jesus, son of David, have pity on me.”

The crowd

⁴⁸ And many rebuked him, telling him to be silent.

The Blind Man

But he kept calling out all the more, “Son of David, have pity on me.”

Jesus

⁴⁹ Jesus stopped and said, “Call him.”

The disciples

So they called the blind man, saying to him, “Take courage; get up, he is calling you.”

The Blind Man

⁵⁰ He threw aside his cloak, sprang up, and came to Jesus.

Jesus and the Blind Man

⁵¹ Jesus said to him in reply, “What do you want me to do for you?” The blind man replied to him, “Master, I want to see.” ⁵² Jesus told him, “Go your way; your faith has saved you.” *Immediately he received his sight and followed him on the way.*

FOCUS: Healing of the Blind Man

COMMENTARY

- The title of the gospel passage is “*The Healing of Bartimaeus*” or “*The Healing of the Blind Man*.”
- We should observe what all the characters do.
- Bartimaeus, begs, cries out; when rebuked, he cries out all the more to Jesus; throws his cloak, springs up when called; talks personally to Jesus; receives sight and follows Jesus; has faith in Jesus.
- The crowd (many) rebuke him (silence him), perhaps they feel embarrassed by the noise of this hopeless man.
- Jesus “stops.” He pays attention to Bartimaeus. He does not ignore him. He commands his disciples to bring Bartimaeus to him; talks to him and heals him.
- The disciples obey Jesus; they seem to sympathize with Bartimaeus.

REFLECTIONS

We appreciate the Gospel Reading better if we observe how it is narrated (*the movement of Jesus, Bartimaeus, and other characters*)

Jesus is the protagonist of the story. We must pay attention to him. He heals.

Next important character to observe is, of course, Bartimaeus. He is healed because of his faith. He shows his faith by shouting out his need even if some people reprimand him. He goes to Jesus and talks to him.

Faith is the way to be healed.

God works miracles to those who have faith.

Jesus is willing to be distracted by people who would like to meddle with his journey.

Jesus does not “postpone” his response, even if it is not in his immediate agenda.

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

The First Reading talks about rejoicing for God is bringing the exiles back. The Second Reading talks about the high priesthood of Christ. It comes from God. The Gospel Reading talks about the healing of the blind man.

How to make your homily/sharing

Begin by telling a story of a healed person. *(a testimony of a member of charismatic group, healed by a preacher; healed by a doctor, etc.)*

Explain why one is healed: because of one's faith in the preacher or healer or doctor or God.

How did one show faith? *(By joining the prayer meeting, by going to the doctor and doing what is prescribed).*

Now, develop the theme of healing. It is possible only through faith.

The Gospel Reading presents the journey from being blind to being able to see, because of his faith. No more blindness, through the intervention and power of Jesus who recognizes faith in the person.

I imagine how happy he is and he follows Jesus right away. Blindness, spiritual or physical, can hinder us from following Christ. Healing of our blindness can lead us to follow him.

The First Reading tells of the story of the Israelite people who are blinded by their "intelligence." They trust in themselves and other people, but not in Him. So they are punished (Exile in Babylon). But at the end, God promises restoration of their former privileges. This is the main point of the Reading.

The Second Reading affirms what Jesus Christ can do to us as a high priest. He offers true sacrifice for the forgiveness of our sins, for our healing.

Nowadays, we need healing because many of us are blind.

We cannot see God working in our midst, in

our parents, brothers and sisters, in our neighbors, etc.

We cannot show appreciation to the beautiful things around us. We refuse to acknowledge the goodness of each one. We are blinded by our prejudices. We do not see the needs of our children because we are preoccupied with our careers. We ignore the presence of our relatives, in-laws and those who give us headaches.

Many of us don not see any hope in our world today. We are desperate.

We need to be like Bartimaeus who "prays" to Jesus who is passing by. He shouts all the more, when reprimanded. He listens to the cues and grabs the opportunity right away. We can also throw our cloaks, spring up right away and approach Jesus.

To end: In the eucharist, Jesus comes again. He is not just passing by, but stays with us in the celebration. Like Bartimaeus, let us acknowledge our blindness to see the beauty around us and that we badly need to receive our sight. In this eucharist, we show our faith in the power of God.

- Prepared by Fr. Cielo Almazan, OFM

III. OUR CONTEXT

1. Today is *Prison Awareness Sunday*
2. Recall your own journey from unbelief to faith, from scarcity to fullness in Jesus. (HM)

PERSONAL PRAYER
