

Points to Help Homily Preparation from a JPIC Perspective

Readings of the 4th Sunday of Lent (Year B) - Sunday, March 22, 2009

2 Chr 36:14-16, 19-23

Eph 2:4-10

John 3:14-21

2 Chr 36:14-16, 19-23—The last chapter of 2 Chr tells of the punishment of kings for their infidelity to God. Verses 11-13 tell of Zedekiah's hard heart. In verse 14, the priests and the people imitate their leader's infidelity and pollute the consecrated temple of the Lord. Because of this infidelity, God punishes the people with exile. During their 70 years of exile, the land finally can retrieve "its lost Sabbaths;" it lies fallow.

The story relates the transgressions of the leader to the transgressions of the people. If this is true of a monarchy, how much more is this true of a democracy in which the people have the opportunity to vote? We are tempted to say: Don't blame me, I voted for.... Are we showing our individualistic tendencies? We tend to struggle with our sense of solidarity and collective responsibility. The internal struggle of solidarity reflects our struggle with international solidarity. As leaders in the world community, will the United States lead nations into exile? Or, by seeking God's kingdom, might we, like Cyrus or Moses rather help to lead people home?

A recent Washington Post article connected ecological crisis and global migration ("Climate Fears Are Driving 'Ecomigration' Across Globe," (2/23/2009), http://mobile.washingtonpost.com/detail.jsp?key=354579&rc=sc_na&p=1&all=1 (accessed 3/11.2009)). One might consider the parallel between immigration and exile. What are the social sins that drive people to migrate, that drive people into exile?

We might also look at humanity as leaders in creation. Just as priests are ordained preside at liturgy, the priestly people of God are baptized to lead creation back to God. Must we force all of our land and people to work all the time? Does God not call us to lead society and creation in celebrating the day of rest, the Sabbath?

Eph 2:4-10—The letter to the Ephesians might be seen to continue the theme of community. For God's plan includes the salvation of all things (1:10; 3:9-10). This particular passage focuses on the graciousness of God's invitation for us to be part of Christ's body.

John 3:14-21—Nicodemus comes to Christ in the night. As a leader of his community, he speaks with Jesus on behalf of at least some in the community: *We* know that you are a teacher from God (v. 2). Nicodemus does not, however, understand the implications of what he admits. Therefore, Jesus teaches what it means to be born "again/from above."

God gave the Son for the salvation of the whole world, not to condemn it. Again, the readings recall the world as community. As baptized people, we are called to help bring the community into the light of justice.

The *New Interpreter's Bible* contrasts Nicodemus coming to Jesus at night with the meetings of American slaves gathering secretly at night to read and study the Bible. The main difference being that the slaves met in faith. One could consider the issue of religious freedom or the pressure to keep faith private. Are we hesitant to speak on public issues from the perspective of our faith?

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