



BENEDICTINE SISTERS OF CHICAGO

Homily for First Sunday of Lent – February 18, 2024 – Judith Murphy, OSB

Gen 9:8-15; Ps 25:1 Ptr 3:18-22; Mk 1: 12-15

Good morning!

As we come to the First Sunday of Lent; we may wonder what this Lent will be for us?

We heard on Friday a caution from Isaiah about when we fast: Our sacrifice should be the humbling of our spirit. How do we respond compassionately to one another? (as Steve Bevans suggested to us last Sunday). God desires mercy more than sacrifice; we pray to renew the covenant written in our hearts: God is our God, and we are God's people.

Pope Francis reminds us (the church) regularly that Jesus came to be wholly our brother, Emmanuel/God-with-us. Francis proclaims a Gospel of joy and peace, the grace of a listening heart for one another, of care for the poor and all our fellow creatures and for the earth, "our common home." These are Francis's prayer for the church.

This reminds me that several years ago, when the world was beginning to deal with COVID, the Benedictine prioresses were asked to share with each other in the CBP how it was going. A concise response from the prioress in Nanaimo, Vancouver, has stuck with me. She wrote:

So far we are well
doing all that we're asked
wondering what we will learn
when this too has passed.

We can also ask what are we learning as individuals, as a community, as individuals within this community--from our current experiences? from our disappointments and successes?

As we respond to what each day brings: our planning for life together now and in the future; our hopes and dreams, considering the cloud of witnesses of fellow members and friends and family that have gone before us; What are we learn from each day given to us by the loving God who continues to create us?

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In this venerable and sacred time of Lent we prepare to renew and refresh our commitment to be christened//and Christian in the Triduum: when we will renew our initiation in our baptismal vows, our commitment in our Benedictine vows, our participation in Eucharist, in being and becoming Christ present for one another and for our world in the Eucharist—in letting our loving Creator continue to create us day by day.

In this month's "Give Us This Day" I found some helpful reminders:

Michael Casey reminds us that religious practice(s) are not enough, that religious practice may never be allowed to outweigh the obligations inherent in our humanity. Love and service of God are inseparable from our solidarity with the sisters and brothers whom we daily encounter; to turn our backs on them is an affront to our common Creator.

Barbara Brown Taylor suggests that we need to renew our sense of Sabbath. "It is as sacred to rest one day a week as it is to loose the bonds of injustice the other six." she says. Refraining from work one day each week is not just good advice. "It is a divine command, as vital to the survival of God's people as is refraining from idolatry or murder "

Perhaps for the twenty-first century monastic, Benedict would consider including in his mandate that "the life of the monk ought to be a continual Lent" //that " the life of the monk ought to have about it a sense of Sabbath." This could nuance our Lenten time in the desert, enable us to hear the Baptist's call to "believe in the gospel."

Your ways, O Lord, are love and truth to those who keep your covenant.