

Homily For Tuesday of the 15th Week of Ordinary Time - Year 1
St Peter's 8:30 AM Mass - July 18, 2023

Exodus 2:1-15 "The daughter of Pharaoh saw the child and took pity on him."

Psalm 69:2,13,29-33 "O Lord, let your salvation protect me."

Matthew 11:20-24 "Jesus reproached the cities in which most of his deeds of power had been done."

Judgment and Repentance

Introduction

You might know that criminal court cases are different than civil cases. In a criminal court, the judge determines whether there is guilt or innocence according to a particular law. In a civil court case, one person makes a claim against another person or party, that they were injured in some way, and are seeking damages for that injury. The judge must decide if the defendant did something to cause that injury, or that they didn't do something they should have done to prevent injury. One of the principles a judge uses is called "The reasonable man." What should a reasonable person have done to prevent injury. If fault is found, the judge will say something to the defendant, "You should have known the right thing to do, or to avoid doing. That's what a reasonable person would do and you ought have done it." The judge will then impose the payment that must be made to the one who was injured.

Matthew

Human judges have to work hard to determine the truth. Our divine judge knows everything, the motivation of our hearts, our actions and our inaction. Jesus is that judge. Every paragraph of the gospels tell us that Jesus knows hearts. He knows what is reasonable and what is not. He judges us on divine principles, not to trick us but to find the truth. We need never be afraid that we will be found guilty unjustly. God knows what is reasonable for weak humans. Still we cannot avoid judgment for what we should do and avoid doing.

Jesus proclaimed judgment on three Israelite towns for their refusal to repent when they had seen the deeds of power which he performed right in front of them. "Woe to you, people of Chorazin, Bethsaida and especially Capernaum where Jesus lived during much of his ministry." You had the opportunity to repent, he tells them, because you know God and have witnessed his deeds of power. You have refused to see that these deeds of power come from the same God who freed you from slavery, who brought you into the land of promise, who protected and sustained you, who loved you like a father and like a mother. And even now you will not repent. Repentance is what the reasonable person of faith must do to honour and acknowledge the God who does deeds of power amongst the people, now as then.

Our faith tells us that there will be a day of judgment and that our action or inaction will lead to judgment. Tyre, Sidon, and especially Sodom, were Gentile cities of great corruption and immorality. They were already under judgment. For the people of Israel and the people of the Church, we have seen the deeds of power. We know that Jesus invites sinners to his kingdom. He invites us to that conversion without which one cannot enter the kingdom. As he says, there is joy in heaven over one sinner who repents. But the sinner - that's us - has to recognize his or her state and turn to God for healing.

Exodus

Moses was under a curse for the crime of being born a Hebrew male. This was an unjust sentence. In this way, he is exactly like the one who comes much later, Jesus, who is convicted unjustly, unreasonably. Yet God's plan is not thwarted by this injustice. He uses three holy women, who combine to open the door for the greatest events of Israel's history and for the ultimate salvation of the world. A mother bears a child, hides him because of the edict that all Hebrew male children should be killed. Then she makes a mini ark and puts him in the river. It comes to where the daughter of Pharaoh is bathing with her attendants. She knows it is a Hebrew child because it is circumcised. Pharaoh's daughter took pity on the child even though she knew it was under Pharaoh's curse. She even took him as her son. She is the one who gave him the name that is so familiar to us,

Moses, Israel's great leader and redeemer from slavery. Moses' sister, Miriam, gets a wet nurse, the mother. Bad comes out of good, Not only does she get protection from the state, but she gets paid to take care of her own son. Moses gets the best education in Pharaoh's court. Moses will play a key role in writing down the five books of the Torah, so we marvel at God's plan, which prepares Moses to speak to Pharaoh later, and lead his people out of bondage into freedom.

Men of Exodus

I am sad to report that the men of today's Exodus reading don't look nearly as good as the women. There is the Egyptian guard beating a Hebrew slave. There is Moses who kills that guard. There are two Hebrew men fighting each other, who won't let Moses break it up, then report Moses to Pharaoh, who wants to kill Moses, who runs away in fear. This is not yet a people with a destiny, although the women foreshadow its greatness. Fortunately, we have a God who redeems us through both the women and the men.

Call To Conversion

We will likely find areas in our lives that are not fully surrendered to the lordship of Jesus, even though Christ is truly present among us, in his Word, in his Eucharist, and in his Church. Paragraph 357 of the Catechism: Being in the image of God the human individual is called by grace to a covenant with his Creator, to offer him a response of faith and love that no other creature can give in his stead.

Paragraph 397 of the Catechism: Man, tempted by the devil, let his trust in his Creator die in his heart and, abusing his freedom, disobeyed God's command. This is what man's first sin consisted of. All subsequent sin would be disobedience toward God and lack of trust in his goodness.

It is especially painful to be scolded by Christ, who loves us with his most merciful heart. There is simply no excuse, no immunity when one is reprimanded by Truth itself. Let us receive humbly and responsibly God's call to conversion again today. Let us be reasonable people of faith.

Key Scripture Passages

Exodus: *A Levite woman bore a son and hid him for three months, then put him in a papyrus basket. The daughter of Pharaoh saw the child and took pity on him and asked the child's sister to call the child's mother and asked her to take care of it. Pharaoh's daughter named the child Moses. When he grew up he went out to his people and saw their forced labour. He killed an Egyptian who was beating a Hebrew. The next day he questioned two Hebrews who were fighting. They asked if he meant to kill them as he had the Egyptian. Because of this Pharaoh sought to kill Moses, but he fled and settled in the land of Midian.*

Psalm: *I sink in deep mire, where there is no foothold. I sink in deep waters and the flood washes over me. My prayer is to you, O Lord. Let your salvation, O God, protect me.*

Matthew: *Jesus began to reproach the cities in which most of his deeds of power had been done, because they did not repent: "Woe to you Chorazin, and to you Bethsaida! For if the deeds of power done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I tell you, on the day of judgment it will be more tolerable for them than for you. And you Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? No, you will be brought down to Hades, for if the deeds of power done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I tell you that on the day of judgment it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom than for you."*