

## **Homily For Tuesday of the First Week of Lent - Year II**

**St Peter's 8:30am/7:00pm Masses - Tuesday, March 08, 2022**

**Isaiah 55: 10-11** "My word ... is like the rain and snow which do not return until they water the earth."

**Psalms 34:3-18** "I sought the Lord and he delivered me from all my fears."

**Matthew 6: 7-15** "If you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you."

### **Rain, Snow and Forgiveness**

#### **Introduction**

We know the three main keys to a successful Lent: Prayer, fasting and charity or almsgiving. First: Turn to God with your heart so that God may live in you. Second: Deny yourself some earthly pleasures so that your appetite may be for God. Third: Give to others so that you may gain a glimpse of what God wants to give you.

Our readings, especially early in Lent, provide us with a kind of blueprint or roadmap for how to discover the depth of the mystery that is Easter. The promise is that the more we enter into this journey with our hearts, the more profound will be our experience of resurrected life transforming death and darkness. Each day has a focus. Today, it is obviously prayer.

One of the things that has happened to us over a period of time is that we have defined prayer as talking to God or with God or even at God. This is not what was understood in the first centuries of Christianity. Prayer was, first and foremost, God speaking and us listening. Only then would our prayer make any sense. Only then would our words not be just undisciplined noise. In the Facebook and Twitter and Instagram age, this probably makes no sense.

#### **Isaiah**

Listen to Isaiah. God speaks a word, but not like our words, which are human sounds or thoughts. We can't make something happen by our words. But God's Word is living and active. It's not so much a thing as an action. Or, it's both at the same time. What is that Word like? Well, one way of describing it is that it is like rain and snow, God tells Isaiah. It waters the earth. It produces, then goes back to

heaven, having made the earth productive. We don't use the bible as a science text, but this is pretty good meteorological science. It's the water cycle that I learned in Grade 3 or 4.

When we listen to God first, our words become like the seeds that produce food in our souls and in our lives. That's how it works. We become the soil that God's Word waters. We know that today there is a crisis of listening to God. But we can have confidence that God's plan will not be thwarted. The rain and snow will keep falling. Nothing can stop it. God's word will succeed.

### **Matthew**

If that was true in Isaiah's time, now we have the Word of God in a human person. Jesus IS the Word of God, who would come down from heaven, like the rain upon the earth, to restore us to intimacy with God. He will not fail. He does not fail. He keeps the Father's promise that his word will produce fruit.

Jesus is concerned with how one approaches God in prayer. He condemns the babbling prayer of the pagans, who think that they will be heard because of their many words. He is not criticizing repetition, which is biblical and pleasing to God but to distinguish from the pagans who try to grab attention from their deities. Don't treat God like that, he is saying. Trust God who already knows your needs.

Sometimes, if I really listen to myself pray, I can hear what Jesus means. So many words. But Jesus says to me, don't do that. Don't try to impress your Father in heaven, who already knows what you need.

The God of Israel was understood to be the father of his people but was rarely addressed that way by an individual. With the Our Father, Jesus invites his disciples to a deep intimacy with God. You have the privileged access of his children. When a disciple prays to the Father who is in heaven, they are speaking to the all powerful, transcendent God of the universe as a loving father who is concerned with each of their needs and invites them into loving relationship as his children.

The first few petitions are about the God who speaks his Word. When we say them, we are listening first. We are letting the rain and snow fall on us. Our task is simply to receive that Word, to absorb it and to let it produce fruit in us. Only then does the Our Father proceed to our request. Daily bread. Forgiveness of our sins. Protection from temptation. Deliverance from evil.

In the middle of those petitions is our response. Forgive others. That's hard but necessary. We will receive God's mercy and forgiveness only to the extent that we show mercy to those who have trespassed against us. That's how it works. The earth only produces fruit if it absorbs the rain. The fruit of unforgiveness is that we don't love, which means rejecting God's own nature, which is love.

Forgiveness is the key. It may not give us warm feelings, but the test of our forgiveness is desiring their good. We wish those who have hurt us or who have hurt the world, to be reconciled to God.

Today, Jesus —the Son of God— teaches us how to behave like a son or daughter of God. We are allowed to say “Father” because the Son is our brother and has revealed the Father to us. Thanks to what Christ has done, we have become children of God. No thing in this world, neither war nor illness can take that away from us. God has said it by his word. We can believe it and trust it as a sure guide for our lives.

## **Key Passages**

**Entrance Antiphon:** *O Lord, you have been our refuge, from generation to generation. From age to age, you are.*

**Isaiah:** *Thus says the Lord, your God: For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there until they have watered the earth ... so shall my word not return to me empty, but it shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.*

**Psalms:** *I sought the Lord, and he answered me, and delivered me from all my fears. Look to him, and be radiant. Never be ashamed. This poor soul cried, and was heard by the Lord, and was saved from every trouble. The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their cry. The Lord is near to the broken hearted, and saves the crushed in spirit.*

**Gospel Acclamation:** *No one lives on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.*

**Matthew:** *When the disciples had gathered around him, he began to teach them: When you are praying, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard because of their many words. For your Father knows what you need before you ask him. Pray then in this way: our Father in heaven, hallowed by your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And do not bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one. For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive your trespasses. But if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.*

**Offertory Prayer:** *Receive, O Creator, almighty God, what we bring from your bountiful goodness.*

**Final Prayer:** *Grant us through these mysteries, Lord, that by moderating earthly desires we may learn to love the things of heaven.*