

Homily for January 19, 2018  
Friday of 2<sup>nd</sup> Week of Ordinary Time

When you were a child, how many times did you beg your mom or dad “Please give me another list of rules and regulations.”

Right. I thought so. Never.

But how often did you try to put off bedtime by begging to hear “Just one more story. Please!?”

What do we do at family reunions and holiday celebrations? We trot out the same old stories, initiating each new generation in the stories of the ancestors. In their telling and re-telling, we make them living history, not just dead facts.

Stories are how we learn who we are, where we’ve come from, and where we are going. A mature human being lives a well-storied life.

One of the ways as Christians we live a well storied life is by hearing Old Testament stories like the one proclaimed today from 1 Samuel 24, of David and Saul in the cave. The Church deems these stories ones that are worth hearing repeatedly, so in alternate Januaries, we spend a month reading through stories from the books of 1 and 2 Samuel.

These stories are our stories because they are faith stories. And while the specifics may be very different, the underlying themes are ones that we all experience.

As we enter today’s story the theme is on how do we respond when wrongly treated?

We heard the other day of David’s victory over Goliath and then yesterday the chorus acclaimed:

***“Saul has slain his thousands,  
and David his ten thousands.”***

And we are told this saying angered Saul and he was very displeased to the point that from that day on he “eyed” David with suspicion so that by today’s reading we are told:

***Then Saul took three thousand chosen men out of all Israel, and went to seek David and his men in front of the Wildgoats’ Rocks.***

Saul represents the soul of a man who is consumed by envy, insecurity that results in paranoia. The Oxford dictionary defines paranoia as:

***A mental condition characterized by delusions of persecution, unwarranted jealousy, or exaggerated self-importance, typically worked into an organized system.***

How destructive it can be for those who have to live with someone like Saul. Perhaps some of us here today have experienced this kind of delusion and exercise of control in your families, workplaces, and even churches. People whose lives are governed by this kind of fear, so often become feared by others or people will want to try and get even with them.

I have had heard stories of people whose lives have been adversely effected by power hungry men and women who have a Saul complex.

David's companions who are hiding with him in the cave see this as their leader's opportunity to rid Israel of Saul. But this he does not do. He realizes that Saul is still the king and David would never harm the lord's anointed. Because of this he trusted that God would in time right the wrong, but David would not take justice into his own hands. And so he declares:

***“My lord the king!” And when Saul looked behind him, David bowed with his face to the earth, and did obeisance.***

We are told that David was a man after God's own heart and here we see him putting into practice something St. Paul wrote in Romans 12:

***Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.***

David wants Saul to see that he has no intention of usurping the king's authority, and so asks:

**Why do you listen to the words of those who say, ‘David seeks to do you harm’?**

What we see David doing here is speaking the truth in a situation where people either want to keep the peace at all costs by going along with Saul or killing Saul. David chooses to do the much harder thing because of his confidence in God:

***May the LORD judge between me and you! May the LORD avenge me on you; but my hand shall not be against you. <sup>13</sup> As the ancient proverb says, ‘Out of the wicked comes forth wickedness’; but my hand shall not be against you.***

How was David able to live with this perspective? The Psalm for today has a title: “A Song of David, when he fled from Saul in the cave”. There we gain insight into David's prayer at this time:

***Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me,  
for in you my soul takes refuge;  
in the shadow of your wings I will take refuge,  
until the destroying storms pass by.***

***They set a net for my steps;  
my soul was bowed down.  
They dug a pit in my way,  
but they have fallen into it themselves.***

David's confidence in God allowed him to truly name his fear but not be dictated by that fear. May we be aware of those people who would adversely try to intimidate us, but remember we are a well storied people. AS people who are inspired by the examples of people like David, who when faced by disturbed and disturbing people can sing:

***Be exalted, O God, above the heavens!  
Let your glory be over all the earth!***