

This book is called the Compendium to the Catechism of the Catholic Church. It summarizes the teaching of the larger Catechism, which is this book. It is like the Reader's Digest Abridged Version.

In the Compendium there is a very helpful paragraph that will assist us in interpreting our Old Testament Lesson for this evening. The question is asked:

What is the importance of the Old Testament for Christians?

And here is the answer:

Christians venerate the Old Testament as the true word of God. All of the books of the Old Testament are divinely inspired and retain a permanent value. They bear witness to the divine pedagogy of God's saving love. They are written, above all, to prepare for the coming of Christ the Savior of the universe.

This evening's reading is illustrative of this. At the literal level we read of the sorrow David experiences upon hearing of the death of his son Absalom, and his cry:

If only I had died for you.

Even more significantly this passage prepares for the coming of Jesus who in Luke 19 we are told:

And when Jesus drew near and saw the Jerusalem he wept over it, ⁴² saying, "Would that even today you knew the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes.

Listen again to David's word in relation to his Son:

O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would I had died instead of you, O Absalom, my son, my son!"

In both cases King David, who anticipates an even greater king weep because a Son, one an individual and the other a city, exercise their free will in a way that results in devastation and heart ache.

David's wish to die in place of his Son, is of course fulfilled by Jesus who dies in place of us. For as St. Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 5:

And he died for all, so that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for him who died and was raised for them.

This is the fundamental truth of the Gospel. When we see what Jesus' death means to me, we learn to die to self we become really alive. Just like the woman whose flow of blood represents

the life being drained from her, so too for us. When we live in wilful defiance to our true King, Jesus we are unwell. However, when we seek to touch him, we receive his healing power. Part of this healing is we discover that the way to happiness is self-forgetful love.

It is an embarrassingly common lesson to take so long to discover this but most of us are incredibly slow learners here. We constantly try other ways, thinking that perhaps the happiness that did not come to us the last time through selfishness will do so next time. It never does. The truth is blindingly clear, but we are clearly blind. And so, like the woman we keep looking and looking for a cure in all the wrong places.

The secret of love is not hidden, for "God is love," and God is not hidden. God said through his prophet Isaiah:

"I did not speak in secret, in a land of darkness; I did not say to the offspring of Jacob, 'Seek me in chaos.' I the LORD speak the truth, I declare what is right" (Is 45:19).

Of course, God's secret plans, which we do not need to know, are hidden. And God's infinite nature, which finite minds cannot know, is hidden. But the thing that we need to know, God does not hide from us. He offers it to us publicly and freely. Jesus invited prospective disciples to "come and see" (Jn 1:39). We are told by the apostle Paul to "test everything; hold fast what is good" (1 Thes 5:21).

This lesson is so well known that even a pagan like Buddha knew it profoundly, or at least its negative half. His "second noble truth" is that the source of all unhappiness and suffering (dukkha) is selfishness (tanha).

All who teach the opposite—that selfishness is the way to happiness—are unhappy souls.

Our Collect for this evening states this succinctly as we prayed:

O God who in the abasement of your Son have raised up a fallen world, fill your faithful with holy joy for on those you rescue from slavery to sin you bestow eternal gladness.

We enter more fully into the holy joy and eternal gladness when we touch Jesus and join our will to his and pray with today's Psalm:

Preserve my life, for I am devoted to you. Save your servant who trusts in you. You are my God.