

God's Call and Its Challenges

By: Fr. Lawrence Frizzell

“O world invisible, we view thee,
O world intangible, we touch thee,
O world unknowable, we know thee,
Inapprehensible, we clutch thee!” (Francis Thompson)

Like the English poet, who knew the sufferings of an alienated humanity, the Church in her worship celebrates the “world” that is the mystery of God. Utterly beyond our human capacity to attain should we rely on our own efforts, we experience the divine because God seeks us and teaches us. “All things betray thee, who betrayest Me!

The condescension of “the Hound of Heaven” in pursuing weak human beings is portrayed marvelously in the call of Moses. What better way could there be to experience God’s simplicity? Moses is drawn by a strange phenomenon, the burning bush, and then hears the divine Word addressing him by name. More attuned to the divine order than the other senses, our hearing grants us an awareness of the suspense of being time-bound. Perhaps we “perceive” reality instantaneously by sight, but how often we are deceived! On the other hand, listening requires a span of attention of understanding. Moses learned first to revere the sacred nature of his encounter. God sanctifies whatever is touched by his presence, so the very ground is holy.

The privilege of knowing God is never limited to the individual but provides the basis for a mission. “I will send you to Pharaoh to lead my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt” (Ex 3:10). No one feels adequately equipped for collaborating with God. In fact, the acknowledgement of human weaknesses becomes the opening through which the divine glory shines. The key to success is not human prowess or wisdom but the assurance that “God is with you” (Ex 3:12).

The name manifests the person, so Hebrew culture attached great importance to knowledge of God’s name. “The God of your ancestors” (3:13) harks back to the initial identification that Moses has been called by the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (3:6). The new name revealed to Moses is derived from the verb “to be”, emphasizing that God is present to sustain his people. The statement “I am who am” became the basis for the specially sacred name Yahweh. In the Jewish tradition and in the New Testament circumlocutions such as “Lord” substituted for this Name. awe for this and other divine names should permeate the Christian tradition as well. Casual use of divine titles shows insensitivity to the divine presence in our midst.

The tendency to speculate that those who suffer premature death must be sinners is criticized by Jesus (Lk 13:1-5). We are all in need of repentance for our sins and are called to turn to God. The two examples cited by Jesus involve human violence or negligence. How many times people blame God when the free will of others should bear responsibility! In many situations it seems better not to place blame on a family member or neighbor, so we lash out at God. The Lord knows that people perhaps could not face a brutally honest evaluation of a given situation. So we formulate our anguish in a “prayer of protest”. A calmer, more objective view of the problem should lead to repentance and forgiveness. The marvelous patience of God with his creatures is described by a parable. Just as a gardener does not give up easily, so Jesus wants us to realize God’s mercy towards those who do not yet produce fruit. However, this should not lead to nonchalance! We look to past history, especially in the Scriptures, for patterns that help us to make sense out of life. “These things happened to them as an example, and they have been written down as a warning to us...” (1 Cor 10:11)

READINGS OF THE WEEK

Exodus 3:1-15

1 Corinthians 10:1-12

Luke 13:1-9

March

靈 修 生 活

四 旬 期 第 三 主 日

阿 爾 貝、范 諾 怡 樞 機 主 教

今天的禮儀跟我們談天主的仁慈與我們的悔改。

第一篇讀經表示天主的仁慈，因祂憐憫祂在埃及受壓迫的子民。記載了梅瑟逃出埃及後，躲在米德揚，成了牧羊人。當他牧放岳父耶特洛的羊群時，有一個異象：看見一堆燃燒著的荊棘，但沒被燒毀。

這正是天主的象徵。天主就是燃燒的火。聖史若望將說，天主是愛（若一 4:8,16）。天主是絕不會消耗的火，因為祂是永恆的。

梅瑟想要走近去看看這個奇異的現象，但天主阻止他，對他說：「不可到這邊來！將你腳上的鞋脫下，因為你所站的地方是聖地。」正因為有這個神的顯示，這地方是聖地。

上主自稱：「亞巴郎的天主，依撒格的天主，雅各伯的天主。」我們的天主是與人有個別關係的天主，而不是一個盲目禦使自然力的神，像外邦人的某些偶像一樣。是一個要和我们建立個別親密關係的天主，這關係是喜樂、和平和幸福的泉源。

然後上主作了一個啓示祂的慈愛的聲明：「我看見我的百姓在埃及所受的痛苦，聽見他們因工頭的壓迫而發出的哀號；我已注意到他們的痛苦。」

天主不會對人類的痛苦漠不關心；反之，非常關心他們的疾苦。而且祂的關懷不只是被動的，而是轉化為行動。所以祂說：「我要下去拯救百姓脫離埃及的手，領他們離開那地方。」

上主使祂的子民出離為奴之地，領他們到一個美麗寬闊的地方，那裡是流奶流蜜的地方，與天主生活在喜樂、平安和富饒的關係中的地方。

梅瑟要求天主啓示祂的名字，以便他能傳告給他的同胞：「當我到以色列子民那裡，向他們說：你們祖先的天主打發我到你們這裡來時，他們必要問我：祂叫什麼名字？我要回答他們什麼呢？」

於是上主以謎語的方式自稱：「我是自有者。」天主的名字不是可認識的；天主是神秘的。

可是上主接受有個名字，可以讓祂的子民稱呼。聖經注釋家解釋說「我是自有者」，這公式很可能意即：「我和你們在一起，我必和你們在一起」；「我便是那要臨在，拯救你們的人。」這公式給人信心與希望，並給人注入一種希望享見天主的動力。

因此第一篇讀經給我們啓示了一位親自與人建立個別關係的天主，一位充滿寬仁的天主，一位天主救世者、解放者。

但人的皈依必須與天主的仁慈相符合。如果人們向天主的仁慈封閉，祂尊重人們的自由，便不來幫助他們。

本 週 讀 經

二 零 一 三 年 三 月 三 日

出 3:1-15；格前 10:1-12；路 13:1-9