

FIRST READING: Ezekiel 36:23-28

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel:

Thus says the LORD: I will prove the holiness of my great name, profaned among the nations, in whose midst you have profaned it. Thus the nations shall know that I am the LORD, says the Lord GOD, when in their sight I prove my holiness through you. For I will take you away from among the nations, gather you from all the foreign lands, and bring you back to your own land. I will sprinkle clean water upon you to cleanse you from all your impurities, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. I will give you a new heart and place a new spirit within you, taking from your bodies your stony hearts and giving you natural hearts. I will put my spirit within you and make you live by my statutes, careful to observe my decrees. You shall live in the land I gave your ancestors; you shall be my people, and I will be your God.  
The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL: Psalm 51:12-13, 14-15, 18-19

***I will pour clean water on you and wash away all your sins.***

A clean heart create for me, O God, and a steadfast spirit renew within me. Cast me not out from your presence, and your Holy Spirit take not from me.

***I will pour clean water on you and wash away all your sins.***

Give me back the joy of your salvation, and a willing spirit sustain in me. I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners shall return to you.

***I will pour clean water on you and wash away all your sins.***

For you are not pleased with sacrifices; should I offer a burnt offering, you would not accept it. My sacrifice, O God, is a contrite spirit; a heart contrite and humbled, O God, you will not spurn.

***I will pour clean water on you and wash away all your sins.***

Gospel: Matthew 22:1-14

+ A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew:

Jesus again in reply spoke to the chief priests and the elders of the people in parables saying, "The Kingdom of heaven may be likened to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son. He dispatched his servants to summon the invited guests to the feast, but they refused to come. A second time he sent other servants, saying, 'Tell those invited: "Behold, I have prepared my banquet, my calves and fattened cattle are killed, and everything is ready; come to the feast."' Some ignored the invitation and went away, one to his farm, another to his business. The rest laid hold of his servants, mistreated them, and killed them. The king was enraged and sent his troops, destroyed those murderers, and burned their city. Then the king said to his servants, 'The feast is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy to come. Go out, therefore, into the main roads and invite to the feast whomever you find.' The servants

went out into the streets and gathered all they found, bad and good alike, and the hall was filled with guests. But when the king came in to meet the guests he saw a man there not dressed in a wedding garment. He said to him, 'My friend, how is it that you came in here without a wedding garment?' But he was reduced to silence. Then the king said to his attendants, 'Bind his hands and feet, and cast him into the darkness outside, where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth.' Many are invited, but few are chosen."

The Gospel of the Lord.

### **Reflection for the 20<sup>th</sup> Tuesday of the Year II**

Who was the prince of Tyre? Where is Tyre, for that matter? Tyre is a city in Lebanon. It is one of the oldest cities still populated until this day. It was a wealthy port city in Ezekiel's day. However, wealth and power seem to have corrupted its king. As was common in the ancient world, the king claimed himself to be divine. Pharaoh of ancient Egypt claimed the divine state as did the Roman Caesars after Julius. This, of course, was absurd. They all died, some by violence. Perhaps Ezekiel speaks, today, to those of us who seek power and wealth before the good of other people and the presence of God. Our faith in God and in Jesus is the basis of our salvation. Our priorities in life are rooted in the love of others and of God.

God is the creator of the entire cosmos. God has made you and me in God's image and likeness. We are reminded of God wherever we look, with whom ever we are and wherever we may be. We know that all our gifts are really from God. Our life, love, family, faith, talents, intelligence and all experience has come to us from God. We live, knowing this. Perhaps the prince of Tyre forgot what we know by instinct; there is only One God from whom all gifts come.

How does one enter the kingdom of God? Who is saved? Both of these questions have the same answer; through faith in God and in Jesus his son. Nothing we do, say or make gains us either. Just as John Lennon sang, "Money can't buy me love," money can't buy us salvation or a ticket to the Kingdom of God. This is what Jesus is saying here. We take this for granted as part of our belief in Jesus. Why would the disciples be astonished at this? They were in formation. They were learning from their teacher and leader, Jesus. We forget that they had yet to experience Jesus' passion, death, resurrection and ascension. They had not yet received the gifts of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. As disciples, Jesus was forming them to be his apostles or ministers that carried on his mission as the post Easter and Pentecost Church. Our presence, in Jesus' church today, is witness to Jesus' and the Spirit's success in the disciple's formation.

One important element to this gospel is in what Jesus said about salvation. Only God saves. In God all is possible. We forget God's nature sometimes. God is love; infinite, eternal and unconditional. We know salvation in this context. Salvation is a gift God gives freely as God has given life and faith to us. We believe in Jesus who has saved us. That's all we need to enter the Kingdom of God, in God's gift.

There was a problem that the early Church faced. There were so few Jewish followers of Jesus. There may have been thousands who flocked to Jesus, but relatively few who were actually converted. By the time the gospels were compiled and written, some forty to ninety years after Pentecost, It was clear that Jesus' message and mission attracted more Gentiles than Jews. Those who are first were those to whom Jesus first came; his own, the Jews. The last were those that Judaism had rejected; the gentiles. The first and last have nothing to do with position in line, but in receptivity to Jesus, the Word of God and the good news of salvation. The gentiles converted to the faith of Jesus first. The Jews remained faithful to the faith of the first covenant.

We, unlike the prince of Tyre, know who we are in light of God's love. We also know our need, always, for God's presence and guidance in our lives. The king thought he possessed divinity. We know our need for God. The king's hubris led to his demise. Our need for God leads us to eternal life and each other. Every believer in Jesus is our sibling and, through faith, we are all bound for eternal life in God's Kingdom.

May we know God's compassion in our flaws, weaknesses and sin.

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