

FIRST READING: Amos 3:1-8; 4:11-12

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Amos:

Hear this word, O children of Israel, that the LORD pronounces over you, over the whole family that I brought up from the land of Egypt: You alone have I favored, more than all the families of the earth; Therefore I will punish you for all your crimes. Do two walk together unless they have agreed? Does a lion roar in the forest when it has no prey? Does a young lion cry out from its den unless it has seized something? Is a bird brought to earth by a snare when there is no lure for it? Does a snare spring up from the ground without catching anything? If the trumpet sounds in a city, will the people not be frightened? If evil befalls a city, has not the LORD caused it? Indeed, the Lord GOD does nothing without revealing his plan to his servants, the prophets. The lion roars— who will not be afraid! The Lord GOD speaks— who will not prophesy! I brought upon you such upheaval as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah: you were like a brand plucked from the fire; Yet you returned not to me, says the LORD. So now I will deal with you in my own way, O Israel! and since I will deal thus with you, prepare to meet your God, O Israel.

The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM 5:4b-6a, 6b-7, 8

***Lead me in your justice, Lord.***

At dawn I bring my plea expectantly before you. For you, O God, delight not in wickedness; no evil man remains with you; the arrogant may not stand in your sight.

***Lead me in your justice, Lord.***

You hate all evildoers; you destroy all who speak falsehood; The bloodthirsty and the deceitful the LORD abhors.

***Lead me in your justice, Lord.***

But I, because of your abundant mercy, will enter your house; I will worship at your holy temple in fear of you, O LORD.

***Lead me in your justice, Lord.***

Gospel: Matthew 8:23-27

+ A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew:

As Jesus got into a boat, his disciples followed him. Suddenly a violent storm came up on the sea, so that the boat was being swamped by waves; but he was asleep. They came and woke him, saying, "Lord, save us! We are perishing!" He said to them, "Why are you terrified, O you of little faith?" Then he got up, rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was great calm. The men were amazed and said, "What sort of man is this, whom even the winds and the sea obey?"

The Gospel of the Lord.

## Reflection for the 13<sup>th</sup> Tuesday of the Year II

On Monday we began to read from the book of Amos. Amos was a shepherd and farmer from the southern kingdom of Judah. He first preached God's word in Judah, but was forced to leave; migrating and preaching anew in Israel. The Israelis deported him back to Judah where he likely wrote his message and memoir as the Book of the Prophet Amos; later incorporated into the Hebrew Bible.

Israel was a powerhouse. The kingdom had expanded to conquer their surrounding neighboring cities and peoples. Wealth poured in and with acquired power, corruption became normative. Enter the prophet Amos. He pointed out the people's lack of concern for the poor, their growing affluence and the ever increasing syncretic religious practices borrowed from their pagan neighbors. Amos accurately predicted the defeat, destruction and captivity of Israel and its people by the empire of Assyria.

God, to him, was angry and vengeful. I wonder if this was not a projection of Amos' hurt, anger and desire for revenge for Israel rejecting him and his message. They did throw him out of their kingdom. Apparently, Amos had difficulty shaking the dust from his feet and not heeding his own prophetic message to repent and change. His message, though, for people to repent, care for the poor, eliminate corruption and grow more faithful to their relationship to God remains powerful even to us and our society.

In fact, the faith of the captured Israelis saw them through their trials and pain. The Ten Lost Tribes of Israel were never lost. Their passage into Diaspora brought their faith in the God of Abraham into a pagan world. Today Judaism is a vibrant, living world religion. It was not, in fact, a punishment but a means by which faith in God could spread. God saved God's people in this process and forgave them. It was Amos who held God's people bound to their sin.

How does God lead us in justice? Sin still exists. Just read or watch the news. Let us examine our own consciences. We can find sin there too. Our justice system is set to seek out and punish criminals. Our justice is depicted as a blindfolded woman with scales of balance. Our prisons are filled with the guilty facing sentences meted out to them as justice. God's justice is different. We are people who seek vengeance and can keep a red rage over past slights for years. Yet, we turn to God when we sin seeking to find salvation and forgiveness from God.

The difference between our justice and divine justice comes from our very different identities. As human beings we are flawed, limited, and finite. In our relationships, there are always strings attached. We are complicated people. God on the other hand has no flaws. God is love; infinite, eternal and unconditional. God forgives all sinners when they approach to ask. God heeds the prayers of the poor, broken and disenfranchised. There are no bounds on God's compassion and mercy. God's justice is always forgiveness. God seeks to heal the sinner as well; of guilt, shame and separation. God seeks to dwell with God's people and to draw all sinners to God's life and love.

The Sea of Galilee is an inland fresh-water lake. On one side of the lake lies a range of hills or mountains. Cold winds that form in the heights along with the moisture they catch can cause high winds and squalls on the lake as the cold, moist air descends quickly. Storms can arise in a

moment. The longest boat ride I've ever taken was a ride on the Long Island Ferry between Orient Point, Long Island, New York and New London, Connecticut. It was on, thank God, a calm day. Storms can happen there too.

In the midst of wind, waves, spray and rain, what did the terrified disciples do? They called out to their leader, Lord and Messiah; Jesus who was sound asleep and unaware of the danger they were in. It was a desperate act of faith, but an act of faith no less. Why did Jesus rebuke them before he calmed the chaos of the storm? I maintain that Jesus, though fully God, was still fully human as well though without sin. They woke him up! He was probably groggy and a bit out of sorts. I know I am when roused from a peaceful and deep sleep!

Jesus used this opportunity to deepen the gift the disciples already possessed; faith. This happened in their query, "What sort of man is this?" The answer, of course, is clear; only the one who created the lake, the local atmospheric conditions and the storm itself. Jesus is God. This is even a more powerful event for they had not witnessed Jesus' death, resurrection and ascension. The Spirit was still a distant promise. This powerful sign changed the hearts of the disciples as quickly as Jesus calmed wind, waves and rain. The twelve knew God's salvation in the moment before salvation came for good. They believed in God and in Jesus.

God never leaves us. God is present in our joys and sorrows, our pleasure and pain, when two or more gather, in the breaking of bread, and deep within us when we sin, when we need God the most. God went with the people into Diaspora and helped their faith to grow. Jesus was near the twelve in the midst of the storm. He'll accompany us into our new parish. God's justice is a force for healing us when ever we need it the most.

May we seek holiness, which is God's abiding presence, in all our experiences.

James D. Beath  
June 28, 2022

PS: I will celebrate mass on Thursday, June 30, at 7:30AM. It will be the last mass we will celebrate as a parish. I invite you to join us. Friday's will be the first in the new, and yet unnamed, one.