

FIRST READING: Hosea 8:4-7, 11-13

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Hosea:

Thus says the LORD: They made kings in Israel, but not by my authority; they established princes, but without my approval. With their silver and gold they made idols for themselves, to their own destruction. Cast away your calf, O Samaria! my wrath is kindled against them; How long will they be unable to attain innocence in Israel? The work of an artisan, no god at all, Destined for the flames— such is the calf of Samaria! When they sow the wind, they shall reap the whirlwind; The stalk of grain that forms no ear can yield no flour; Even if it could, strangers would swallow it. When Ephraim made many altars to expiate sin, his altars became occasions of sin. Though I write for him my many ordinances, they are considered as a stranger's. Though they offer sacrifice, immolate flesh and eat it, the LORD is not pleased with them. He shall still remember their guilt and punish their sins; they shall return to Egypt.

The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL: Psalm 115:3-4, 5-6, 7ab-8, 9-10

***The house of Israel trusts in the Lord.***

Our God is in heaven; whatever he wills, he does. Their idols are silver and gold, the handiwork of men.

***The house of Israel trusts in the Lord.***

They have mouths but speak not; they have eyes but see not; They have ears but hear not; they have noses but smell not.

***The house of Israel trusts in the Lord.***

They have hands but feel not; they have feet but walk not. Their makers shall be like them, everyone that trusts in them.

***The house of Israel trusts in the Lord.***

Gospel: Matthew 9:32-38

+ A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew:

A demoniac who could not speak was brought to Jesus, and when the demon was driven out the mute man spoke. The crowds were amazed and said, "Nothing like this has ever been seen in Israel." But the Pharisees said, "He drives out demons by the prince of demons." Jesus went around to all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the Gospel of the Kingdom, and curing every disease and illness. At the sight of the crowds, his heart was moved with pity for them because they were troubled and abandoned, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few; so ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest."

The Gospel of the Lord.

### **Reflection for the 14<sup>th</sup> Tuesday of the Year II**

We began to read from the book of the prophet Hosea just yesterday. He was more or less a contemporary of the FIRST READING: Hosea 8:4-7, 11-13

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Hosea:

Thus says the LORD: They made kings in Israel, but not by my authority; they established princes, but without my approval. With their silver and gold they made idols for themselves, to their own destruction. Cast away your calf, O Samaria! my wrath is kindled against them; How

long will they be unable to attain innocence in Israel? The work of an artisan, no god at all, Destined for the flames— such is the calf of Samaria! When they sow the wind, they shall reap the whirlwind; The stalk of grain that forms no ear can yield no flour; Even if it could, strangers would swallow it. When Ephraim made many altars to expiate sin, his altars became occasions of sin. Though I write for him my many ordinances, they are considered as a stranger's. Though they offer sacrifice, immolate flesh and eat it, the LORD is not pleased with them. He shall still remember their guilt and punish their sins; they shall return to Egypt.

The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL: Psalm 115:3-4, 5-6, 7ab-8, 9-10

***The house of Israel trusts in the Lord.***

Our God is in heaven; whatever he wills, he does. Their idols are silver and gold, the handiwork of men.

***The house of Israel trusts in the Lord.***

They have mouths but speak not; they have eyes but see not; They have ears but hear not; they have noses but smell not.

***The house of Israel trusts in the Lord.***

They have hands but feel not; they have feet but walk not. Their makers shall be like them, everyone that trusts in them.

***The house of Israel trusts in the Lord.***

Gospel: Matthew 9:32-38

+ A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew:

A demoniac who could not speak was brought to Jesus, and when the demon was driven out the mute man spoke. The crowds were amazed and said, "Nothing like this has ever been seen in Israel." But the Pharisees said, "He drives out demons by the prince of demons." Jesus went around to all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the Gospel of the Kingdom, and curing every disease and illness. At the sight of the crowds, his heart was moved with pity for them because they were troubled and abandoned, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few; so ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest."

The Gospel of the Lord.

e prophet Amos. Unlike Amos, who was from Judah, Hosea seemed to be a native of Israel. He had a long career as God's prophet. Like Amos, he preached doom and destruction. Unlike Amos, his message also had hope of restoration of Israel's place as God's beloved. He used his own life experience to demonstrate the nature of God's love and the relationship of God and people.

Apparently, his wife was unfaithful and he began to doubt the paternity of his own children. He threw his wife and kids out of his home, at one point, only to renew his feelings of love and longing for them. Hosea brought them back with renewed love and compassion. He used this experience as the basis of how God responds to God's people. After exile, God would restore God's people to their rightful place as God's own.

Given today's reading, Hosea has laid out God's complaints against the people of Israel. God's king was the king of Judah. Since the time of king Rehoboam, Solomon's heir, the kingdoms of Judah and Israel were separate kingdoms under separate kings. Israel chose its own kings

instead of choosing the heir of David. This was God's first complaint. They lived separated from the rest of God's people.

Judaism has no images of God. Any representation of God was an idol. The name of God is so sacred in Judaism that it is never uttered. Instead of speaking the Hebrew word, "YHWH," believers instead say, "Hashem;" The Name. Any graphic image or statue, even though not of God, could be, in Hosea's thinking, an idol too. Hosea connected such images with the Golden Calf of Exodus. It was doomed to the fire as would all the gold and silver of Israel and the city of Samaria itself.

The coming destruction and Diaspora of Israel's people would hearken to their return to slavery in Egypt. This is not a pleasant message for this morning. Hosea was firm on the people's guilt and God's punishment. Samaria and its wealth, people and dynasties would face destruction and capture as booty by the Assyrian king and his armies. Only after catastrophe could restoration and reconciliation begin.

I always like to point out that even though God was displeased with God's people, God never abandoned them. In their faith, these people carried God with them into capture and Diaspora. What had seemed to be a final act of destruction, death and doom, was in fact an act that moved God's people out of their confines of the Promised Land into a pagan world that desperately needed God. Judaism is a living and growing sign of God's fidelity and a people's faith. What we can discern from this passage can lead us to a deep awareness of the grace of God that draws three closed parishes in to a new one to form Christ's Church.

In Judaism, God is a living God who lives among God's people. They could know this living God in every aspect of life. Every person and every event was an opportunity to know God's presence. To emulate God is to live, love and delight in God's creation, like God, too, takes delight in God's people. God is in heaven, the Psalmist prayed, but God was not confined there. The Psalmist also prayed that God does whatever God wills. God wills to live among God's people where mutual delight could happen. Praising God could happen in weal, woe, joy and sorrow. There are no limits to God's infinite, eternal and unconditional love.

How many times do people misperceive and misunderstand us? Apparently these things happened to Jesus, too. Here he had just performed a real public service. He got a crazy homeless man off the street. For that good deed, to the man and to the community, he was called a spawn of Satan; an ultimate irony. From our perspective of faith, we know Jesus to be God. Not all Jesus' contemporaries had our perspective and faith. This accusation didn't faze Jesus at all. He continued his mission and ministry regardless of public opinion and his opposition's spin.

We also got a moment to glimpse Jesus' inner life and into his heart. Filled with compassion, for it was the nature of God, he prayed for all the lost souls he met. His prayer for more to serve God's people is powerful. Yet from where will those workers come? We Catholics can have blinders for we hear Jesus pray for more priests and nuns. Speaking as a priest, this is a good thing, or it was. Perhaps we need to expand our vision to include others as well. Today, we are always fewer and older.

We priests do not appear on earth out of thin air. We are not like the five loaves and two fish. We are flesh and blood people who have responded to the call of our Baptism and ministry first, before responding to the call of priesthood. All of us have been baptized into the priesthood of Jesus. We all have the call of Ministry. Jesus has spoken to each of us to answer and respond to Jesus' prayer. Each of us can respond, "Here am I Lord," for God's harvest. We are also members of God's harvest. God gifts us with faith that will grow.

May the love of God always fill our empty spaces.

James D. Beath

July 5, 2022