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Uniting Word & World

For Sunday, September 6, 2015

The Dream of the Kingdom

This Sunday's Scripture Readings

23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time

<http://new.usccb.org/bible/readings/090615.cfm>

Isaiah 35:4-7a

James 2:1-5

Mark 7:31-37



Last Saturday evening, at Mass in Be'er Sheva, Israel, the young Polish pastor asked a strange question, "How do you get here?" His answer, too, was strange, "Go to the end of the world and turn left!" He proceeded to remind the ten of us in the assembly that we are in the desert. The desolate desert of Abraham.

Father Pyotr has decorated the small chapel in desert colors with a tented entrance into the sanctuary. On the back wall, lighted, is Rublev's icon of the *Trinity*, Abraham's visitation. At the end of the world, after a left turn, we find St. Abraham's parish, a small

oasis of Catholics amidst Jews and Muslims. Its location, [Be'er Sheva](#), is in the middle of the area where Abraham spent much of his time. In the mini-church, there is light shining out of that tent-like sanctuary, reminiscent of the light that God shone forth through Abraham, the Father of many faiths.

Isaiah, the great prophet, and Jesus, the Messiah and Son of God, shared the dream of Abraham. That dream, that vision, was a laser beam of hope in each of their hearts that lighted their steps to press forward in their unique missions. They were not blind! They could see through and beyond their earthly surroundings right into the heart of God's dream.

"Intimacy with God was squandered in Eden," as one author put it. Isaiah and Jesus both tell us that our eyes need to be opened... opened to see that that intimacy is the only thing that satisfies our human longings. False visions are flashed at us on all sides. No matter where we

look, we are told that happiness comes when we put on the right clothes, drive the right car, live in the right house, in the right neighborhood, in the right city, etcetera! Our eyes are dazzled with flash camera lies.

Jesus opens the ears of someone he shouldn't have even been talking with. A pagan. A Gentile. He had crossed into a foreign land. He was not walking among the chosen people. Why was he there? It was unconventional to mingle with non-Jews, much less touch them or even help them. But Jesus did. Would you believe that even in this day and age, it has been heard of that here in Israel some "keepers of the law" spit on Gentiles? They spit on Catholics, whom they consider outside the law of God. Two thousand years ago, Jesus does the unconventional thing and spits a healing to this non-Jew.

There is much noise coming from the United States, reaching even to the desert of Abraham. The racket traveling across ocean and sea would never indicate that the United States is a Christian country. Killing is rampant. Violence pervasive. Fear of infiltration by ISIS paralyzes our love of neighbor. And potential leaders speak publicly without common human decency and respect for others. Political fights are the talk of the town. Just as our eyes are dazzled with untruths, so our ears are bombarded with noise. The ears of our hearts are deafened by this pagan cacophony. The ears of our hearts can't hear the voice of God. Spiritual deafness is rampant.

Even in this land of Abraham, the atmosphere is that of quiet unrest. It seems like a land mine ready to explode when tread upon by the lightest footstep. Air-raid alerts and bomb shelters are ready, just in case! How can people hear the voice of God saying, "Fear not! Peace, be still"? How can light shine forth from Abraham's tent? Only with faith in God's promises. Only by keeping God's dream alive.

Can we keep our focus amidst all this turmoil on the dream of the kingdom that Isaiah and Jesus paint for us? Can we walk the straight path? Can we ask God to open our blind eyes and our stopped ears that we may see and hear the truth? It's a hard path. It's not an easy walk. Jesus showed us that. But if we can do it, with God's help, we will again experience intimacy with God like that of paradise. We will leap with joy and sing with all our hearts in pure unadulterated happiness. We will walk in the brilliant light of faith that shines forth from Abraham's tent. Jesus, heal us, we beg you!

Patricia DeGroot, ObISB

PRAYER

Lord,
you invite all who are burdened to come to you.
Allow your healing hand to heal me.
Touch my soul with your compassion for others.
Touch my heart with your courage and infinite love for all.
Touch my mind with your wisdom,
that my mouth may always proclaim your praise.
Teach me to reach out to you in my need,
and help me to lead others to you by my example.
Most loving Heart of Jesus,
bring me health in body and spirit

that I may serve you with all my strength.
Touch gently this life which you have created, now and forever.
Amen.
—Prayer for Healing.

NOTICES

DIOCESAN FISCAL MANAGERS CONFERENCE, September 27–30, Atlanta

The Diocesan Fiscal Managers Conference (DFMC) will take place in Atlanta from September 27–30, 2015. The keynote speaker this year will be the Most Revered Wilton D. Gregory, Archbishop of Atlanta. LPi will be attending DFMC as well, so if you're attending, be sure to stop by our booth to say hi! More information is available at <http://www.4lpi.com/live-events/events-and-conferences/>.

CATECHETICAL SUNDAY—September 20, 2015

The USCCB offers resources for parishes and families to celebrate Catechetical Sunday on September 20. The theme for this year is “Safeguarding the Dignity of Every Human Person.” For more information and parish resources, visit: <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/how-we-teach/catechesis/catechetical-sunday/index.cfm>.

WORLD MEETING OF FAMILIES

In preparation for the upcoming World Meeting of Families — Philadelphia 2015, LPi has created a cover for parishes to use to encourage prayers for its success. The cover is available at no charge via LPi's [Art & Media Portal](#). Current customers can find more versions by logging in and searching keyword “WMOF.”

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