

Gospel

A Reflection on Ex 2,1-15 and Mt 11, 20-24

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Media

A reflection on Lk.19.31

“The Lord needs it”.

Jesus sent two of His disciples saying, “Go into the village ahead of you, and as you enter it you will find tied here a colt that has never been ridden. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks you, “Why are you untying it? just say this, ‘The Lord needs it’ (Lk.19.29-31). Jesus knew very well that He needs the colt for His Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem because ‘all the things that are written about Himself in the Old Testament’ (L.24.27) had to be fulfilled (Mt.5 17).

Through Prophet Zechariah, who lived 500 years before the coming of Jesus, the Holy Spirit foretold about the coming Ruler of God’s people. “Rejoice greatly, O daughter Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter Jerusalem! Lo, your king comes to you; triumphant and victorious is he, humble and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey” (9.9).

Let us just reflect on the phrase: “The Lord needs it”. As the Lord needed the colt (donkey) for His Jerusalem Entry, **He**

needs all of us for a particular task. There was a lady, who from very young age, has been praying that she gets a husband of faith who can pray with her and go to church together. But she happened to get a husband who was not at all religious minded, and a drunkard too. Once she was asking her counselor Priest why God did this to her. The Priest told: "To whom else shall God entrust that person, if not to you who is so prayerful? God **needs** you to transform that person through your prayer and perseverance". Thereafter she had no complaints to God for what He had permitted in her life.

Very often we feel that we go through difficult situations and live with difficult people. Seldom do we realize that God has a purpose in placing us in that situation and amidst such people. He **needs us** to change the situations and change the people with His Grace. If only we 'have the mind of Christ' (Phil. 2.5), we can see people and situations with His eyes, hear with His ears, speak with His mouth and love with His heart. As we are entering into the Passion Week, may we

become a blessing for others by letting our Lord use us according to His pleasure and purpose. Then we can join with Jesus in saying: "I glorified you on earth by finishing the work that you gave me to do. So now, Father, glorify me in your presence" (Jn.17.4)

Mary Pereira

The Faith of the Centurion (Mt. 8.5-13)

Jesus entered Capernaum, an army officer approached him to ask his help for healing of his servant who was sick lying at home. The army officer was not a Jew. Still with expectant Faith in Jesus, he approached him. What is remarkable to notice here is the love and concern of the officer towards his

servant. It was not so among the masters at the time of Jesus. A servant or a slave working under a master is not given consideration and status of a human being. Especially when the slave becomes sick or invalid, he is thrown out as a useless commodity. But here we find this officer coming to Jesus to ask for the healing of his servant because he really cared for his servant. Something which is to be appreciated!

The officer also had faith and confidence in his position towards his servants. So when Jesus said he would come and heal the servant, realizing that he is a non-Jew, and was of lower status than that of Jesus, he said: "I am not worthy to have you under my roof. Just say the word and my servant will be healed. For I am a man under orders myself, and I have soldiers under me. And if I say to one: 'Go', he goes, and if I say to another: 'Come', he comes, and if I tell my servant: 'Do this,' he does it."

Before healing the servant, Jesus turns to those who were following him and said: "I tell you, I have found no one in Israel with faith like this. I say to you, many will come from east and west and sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob at the feast in the kingdom of heaven; but those who belong to the kingdom will be thrown out into the darkness outside; there they will weep and gnash their teeth."

Let us take this as a warning for us who are labeled Christians, Baptised, the so called 'followers of Christ'. The Lord is looking into our hearts to see how much faith we have; and also in our lives, how much do we express that Faith. The Holy Spirit tells through St. Paul: "When the Gentiles, who do not have Law, practise by nature what the Law commands, they are a Law to themselves, even though they do not have the Law. They show that the demands of the Law are engraved in their hearts, while their conscience also bears testimony and their conflicting thoughts either accuse or defend them. This will take place on the day when, according to my Gospel, God will judge people's secret actions through Jesus Christ"

(Rom.2.14-16): "To the jailer who asked Paul and Silas "What must I do to be saved?" they answered, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you and your household will be saved". Whether it is a Hindu or Muslim or any one belonging to any religion, cast or creed, if he "calls upon the name of the Lord, he will be saved" (Act. 2.21). It is 'through the grace of the Lord Jesus that everyone will be saved" (Acts. 15.11).

Let us take heed to the message the Lord is giving us through this incident of healing the servant of the Centurion. Our bearing a Christian name through the Sacrament of Baptism, our ritualistic devotions and prayers will not guarantee heaven for us. We need to have a living Faith in the Lord which will make us doers of his Word. In our lifetime, Jesus is our merciful Lawyer before God the Father, but after our death, he will be our Just Judge. But Jesus also has made it clear: "He who rejects me and does not receive my word, already has a judge; the very word I have spoken will condemn him on the last day". (Jn. 12.48). So let us make use of our life time living a life of Faith, which means believing in Jesus and living his Word, through which salvation is guaranteed for all. (because they already receive Baptism by desire , if not by blood). 'The upright one (belonging to any cast or creed) will live by faith. So let us not be ashamed of this Good News; for it is God's power saving those who believe, first the Jews and then the Greeks' (Rom. 1.16, 17).

Mary Pereira

You also must be ready (Mt. 24.44)

Ready for what? For the coming of our Lord Jesus. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (Jn. 1.1). This Word became flesh and dwelt among us (Jn. 1.14). That is Christmas. So from the 1st day of Advent, we prepare ourselves to celebrate this great event of

'infinite God became man' to live among us, in order to make us God-like, divine. He came to reconcile us with the Father.



Advent is a time to ponder on the love of God. "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life"(Jn 3.16). "In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins" (1 Jn. 4.10). We are called to celebrate this love of God. Forgetting this main focus, we get ourselves busy with many external preparations. In Advent Season our Mother Church leads us through beautiful readings in the Liturgy of the Holy Mass, inviting us to reflect on our lives in order to cleanse our hearts/ lives of all that is not of the Lord and of His Kingdom, so that His Kingdom of love, joy and peace may be established in us. As we prepare the Crib for baby Jesus, let us also get ready to prepare our hearts for Him, for it is there He really wants to be born and to dwell.

Also Advent should help us to prepare ourselves for the Second Coming of our Lord Jesus. In reference to the story of Noah and Lot, Jesus pointed out that the people were too engaged in 'eating and drinking, marrying and given in marriage, buying and selling, planting and building' (Lk 17.27, 28). Jesus reminds us that there is something more important than these things. Our citizenship is in heaven, where the Lord has

'prepared a place for us' (Jn. 14.3) The Son of Man will come at an unexpected time to take us there and hence we need to be ready to meet our Lord. Those who have gone before us for the eternal reward and those of us who will get the call before the Second Coming of Christ will be 'raised imperishable, and will be changed'. Those who are destined to remain here to hear the trumpet call of His Second Coming will face the Saviour of the world in 'the twinkling of an eye' (1 Cor. 15.52). So let us "be dressed for action and have our lamps lit" (Lk. 12.35), 'preparing the way of the Lord' (Mt.3.3) to tell people that Jesus is going to come again, and also help them to prepare for His coming.

Prayer: Lord help us 'not to store up for ourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal, but help us to store up for ourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal' (Mt. 6.19,20).

Mary Pereira

Justice and Mercy

- “And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”” (Genesis 2:16–17, ESV)
- The heart of God's command is obedience. Obey and live and enjoy life; disobey the command and suffer and die.
- This law runs right through the whole of the Bible.



A Reflection on Lk 13. 25-28

“When once the owner of the house has got up and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and to knock at the door saying, ‘Lord, open to us’, then in reply he will say to you, ‘I do not know where you come from’. (Lk. 13.25)

Our God is a God of Mercy and God of Justice. “Note the kindness and the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen but God’s kindness towards you, provided you continue in his kindness; otherwise you also will be cut off” (Rom. 11.22). Through the book of Sirach, the Lord tells us: “Do not say, “His mercy is great, he will forgive the multitude of my sins”, for both mercy and wrath are with him, and his anger will rest on sinners. Do not delay to turn back to the Lord, and do not postpone it from day to day; for suddenly the wrath of the Lord will come upon you, and at the

time of punishment you will perish" (5. 6, 7)

The door of God's grace and mercy is opened for us during our life-time. He keeps inviting us to repent our wayward life and come back to Him. But a time will come when the door will be closed. In the above cited Parable Jesus makes it clear. Salvation is a free gift from the Lord, but the Holy Spirit tells us through St. Paul: "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil.2.12). We need to co-operate with the grace of God. In the Parable of the ten virgins also we find 'the door was shut' when the five foolish virgins came late buying the oil for their lamps (Mt. 25.10). Let us be watchful, for we 'do not know on what day our Lord is coming' (Mt. 24.42). Let us be 'dressed for action and have our lamps lit' (Lk.12.35). We need to awake from our slumber and lethargy in our spiritual pursuits. St. Paul exhorts: "Sleeper awake! Rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you" (Eph. 5.14). "Exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today", so that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. For we have become partners of Christ, if only we hold our first confidence firm to the end" (Heb. 3.13,14).

Mary Pereira

The Feast of the Mother of Sorrows

 "A sword will pierce your own soul" (Lk. 2.35)

Our Lord Jesus has given us his Mother in order that we may take his place, love her and care for her; and she in turn

will love us and lead us closer to Jesus. To accept her Motherhood in our spiritual life is the call to every believer in Christ. We are invited to relate to her as John, the believing and loving disciple related (Jn. 19.27). Mother Mary loves and cares for us as she did to Jesus in his earthly days. So let us respond to her love and entrust ourselves to her Maternal care and intercession.

Prayer: 'O Blessed Virgin Mary, through you we drink from the wellsprings of salvation'. (Responsory-Morning Prayer-Breviary). Through your intercession may the whole humanity, for whose sake Jesus your Son was made an atoning sacrifice, enter into that wellsprings of salvation. May we accept our sufferings and unite them with that of yours and offer them to the Heavenly Father in atonement for our sins.

Mary Pereira

A Reflection on Mk. 10. 35-40

The two Apostle Brothers, John and James, asked Jesus to grant their heart's desire of one brother sitting on the right hand side and the other on the left hand side, when Jesus reached in his glory. We too put forth many petitions to Jesus which are quite selfish and for our own glory. Ignoring their question, Jesus asked them: "Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with"? In order that their request may be granted, they immediately answered: "We are able". But Jesus understood well that they did not grasp the meaning of it. So very affirmatively Jesus said: "The cup that I drink you will drink; and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized".

Before His Passion on the Mount of Olives Jesus prayed:

“Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me; but not my will but yours be done” (Lk. 22.42). Jesus was asking the Apostles whether they are willing to drink the cup of suffering. Jesus is asking the same question to each one of us. Are we ready to take the cup of suffering extended to us by the Heavenly Father for varied purposes, and drink it to the full? Very often we want to avoid suffering, run away from suffering situations and hate the people who give us sufferings. “Whoever says, “I abide in him”, ought to walk/live just as he walked/lived. (1 Jn. 2.6)

After the Baptism of Jesus in river Jordan, Jesus said: “I have a baptism with which to be baptized, and what stress I am under until it is completed!” (12.49). Jesus was pointing out to this completion of His baptism, namely His death on the Cross, when He asked the two Apostles whether they are ready to be baptized with His baptism. The Holy Spirit asks through St. Paul: “Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?” (6.3). This is the template of our baptism which is to be lived everyday of our lives. We have to “consider ourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus” (6.11). In life and in death, Jesus is our model. May the Holy Spirit give us the courage to “fight the good fight of the faith and take hold of the eternal life, to which we are called” (1 Tim.6.12).

Please listen to the audio ‘Martyrdom of St. James’- homily by Fr. Mariakumar- in the page ‘Media’

A reflection on Jn. 15.15

Jesus said: “I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father” (Jn. 15.15). This loving God who is our Creator knows the plans He has for us, “plans for welfare and not for harm, to give us a future with hope” (Jer. 29. 11). Why don’t we ‘seek Him with

our whole heart' (Jer. 29.13) and get to know His plans for my life? He says, "Call to me and I will answer you, and will tell you great and hidden things that you have not known" (Jer. 33.3). Unfortunately we don't have not much time to dial this phone number of God- Jer. 33.3- because all the time we are occupied with incoming and outgoing calls, sms and chats through our mobile and iphone. When we are confused and face uncertainties in life, our loving Lord is so eager to help us out. He has promised: "I will instruct you and teach you the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you" (Ps. 32.8). If we cherish a loving relationship with this God every day of our lives, it will no doubt turn to be for our good! "Who are they that fear the Lord? He will teach them the way that they should choose" (Ps. 25. 12). So let us build up a loving and living relationship with this God who walks with us, stand by us in whatever situation we are.

The hymn written by Joseph M. Scriven (1855) to comfort his mother in her loneliness is an inspiring one to all.

What a Friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear!

What a privilege to carry, everything to God in prayer!

O what peace we often forfeit, O what needless pain we bear,
All because we do not carry everything to God in prayer.

Have we trials and temptations? Is there trouble anywhere?

We should never be discouraged; take it to the Lord in prayer.

Can we find a friend so faithful who will all our sorrows share?

Jesus knows our every weakness; take it to the Lord in prayer.

Are we weak and heavy laden, cumbered with a load of care?

Precious Savior, still our refuge, take it to the Lord in prayer.

Do your friends despise, forsake you? Take it to the Lord in prayer!

In His arms He'll take and shield you; you will find a solace

there.

Listen, my people, to my warning

We hear so many warnings from different sources. About a forthcoming Tsunami, an earthquake, a flood, hot wave, storm etc. We immediately heed to the precautions suggested and move to different places, or seek protection in some other suggested ways. They are all meant for our physical well being. Our living God, throughout the centuries, have been giving us warnings, not only for our physical well being, but also, and mainly, to avoid spiritual disaster. Through Prophet Jeremiah, the Lord admonished Israel: "thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel....'Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be my people; and walk only in the way that I command you, so that it may be well with you'. Yet ,they did not obey or incline their ear, but, in the stubbornness of their own evil will, they walked in their own counsels, and looked backward rather than forward....They did not listen to me, or pay attention, but they stiffened their necks" (Jer. 7, 23-26)

Even now we, the new Israel, are repeating the same mistake, doing things even worse than our ancestors did. But our God, so merciful and compassionate, who wants everyone to turn back one's evil ways, is patiently giving us opportunities again and again to listen to His admonitions; He gently warns us of the consequences we will have to face, if we fail to heed to His voice.

Lent is a wonderful Season of Grace for us- a Season of prayer, fasting, penance, almsgiving, doing deeds of mercy- all meant to unite ourselves with the redeeming Sacrifice of

Jesus on the Cross. From the 1st day of Lent, Ash Wednesday, every day, the Readings of the Liturgy of Mass call us for a radical change of heart- change of our attitudes to ourselves and to others, change of our way of speech and behaviour to people, our way of loving etc. Because often our life style is not according to the standards set by Jesus. Yet He is so merciful and so patient with us. He knows our frailty; He does not want to condemn us, but rather like a good shepherd searching for the lost sheep, He is coming behind us.

Let us love this loving Lord a bit more in this Lenten Season. Let us gladden His heart by heeding to His voice. May the Holy Spirit of God help us rise from a life of lukewarmness. In the words of St. Paul He exhorts us: "Sleeper, awake! Rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you" (Eph. 5,14).

Mary Pereira

BEARING FRUITS ALL THE TIME

Continuation of reflection on last article

How can we produce the fruits of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5. 22, 23) 'in season and out of season'? The Holy Spirit tells us through St. Paul that 'we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life" (Eph. 2.10). And he exhorts us 'not to grow weary in doing what is right' (Gal. 6.9). Even if we are faced with ongoing jealousy, envy, enmity and so on...from those around us, we are not to react; but be unmindful of their 'evil' attitude, and continue to do good. Is it practically possible for us?

Yes, it is; but only with the help of God. Knowing our weakness, the Lord has given us His Spirit to be with us always. (Jn. 14.16); but we

must live in fellowship with the Holy Spirit (2. Cor. 13.13) so that he will lead us, (Gal.5.16) and guide us (Gal. 5.25) – our every word, thought and deed. St. James says: “We do not have because we do not ask” (4.2). If we ask the indwelling Holy Spirit to help us radiate the goodness of Christ always, to ‘bear much fruit and become His disciples and glorify God, the Father’ (Jn.15.8), the indwelling Divine Guest will be more eager than us in helping us because his mission is to glorify God in our lives (Jn.16.14). That is why St. Paul said: “Pray in the Spirit always” (Eph. 6.18).