

Fr. Rick's Homily Notes – March 14 & 15, 2020

I've always wondered a bit why the Jewish people, liberated from indentured servitude in Egypt by the hand of God and led safely through the waters of the Red Sea despite an army in hot pursuit were given so frequently to complaining, grumbling and quarreling, so much that today's first reading from Exodus reflects the overflowing exasperation of Moses with them. As I considered this, I came to one clear conclusion ... they were afraid ... and aren't we, too, these days ...

Concern and fear are certainly generated by circumstances that appear to be overwhelming, presently beyond our control, only able to be mitigated by extreme measures we might at first resent or resist before we humbly accept inconveniences for the common good. We fear things that involve a great number of little changes that, all together, drastically alter how we live our daily lives, postponing nonessential things we otherwise do enjoy, altering substantially how we do ordinary things, and even limiting what ordinary things we actually are able to do. Running out of water, food and patience in the desert, the Jewish people were understandably fearful; that we, dealing with COVID-19 coronavirus, feel likewise is no surprise!

What the people of God forgot then and what we tend to forget now is that GOD IS IN OUR MIDST. Involved in a situation that is certainly not ordinary, we're out of our comfort zones; back home in Egypt, while not liking a slaves' life, at least the Jewish people had enough to eat and to drink; it was not a matter of course for them to trust the Lord even though they generally succeeded, by grace and providence, to find food and water even in a most inhospitable place, the desert. Their experiences of many past marvels done for them by God were not yet sufficient for them to confront the trials of the day without anguish and fear. In the face of this, God tells Moses to strike a rock, promising water will flow from it sufficient for the people and their herds. Getting water from a rock? Maybe from a well, if we could locate one: but, from a rock?! God, Moses, you've got to be kidding!

Despite their misgivings, Moses does what God commands and healing waters flow sufficiently, and the people begin to remember the many marvels the Lord had already done for them in the past, and start to calm down a bit, trusting in God to see them through the difficulties that laid ahead.

St. Paul said we are able to stand firm by faith and in hope because, like the water from the rock, God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit; we, too, upon remembrance and reflection, know that God has already done many great things for us, and God Who has never forgotten us will not forsake us during these present challenges. We may feel helpless, immersed in difficulties as we are, but God is in our midst. When the Samaritan woman in the gospel was brought face to face with challenges, first about her certain lack of social acceptability, then as being a frequent flier in marriages without love, and finally being told by a stranger that she didn't fully understand her own religion, that it wasn't so much about particular place of worship but about a spirit-filled relationship with truth, then, and only then she realized that God was in her midst, right in front of her, right beside her, at Jacob's well, helping her and, through her, many others to have a stronger faith.

I took a little inventory in prayer of the many good things the Lord has done for me over these past 66, going on 67 years, and it was encouraging and reassuring; along with heart surgery that saved my life slightly over 12 yrs. ago, I found at least one, if not a thousand, wonderful things God did for me each year of my life. Remembering that now helps me remain calm; may we, through devotion to prayer and the Sacraments, find that peace the world does not provide and faith alone supplies. GOD IS IN OUR MIDST; we need not be afraid. That there will be silver linings discovered in our difficulties I have no doubt; like increased attention to ordinary good hygiene despite our being too busy, like a re-balancing of priorities from hyper-activity to renewed focus on family life, like a diminished pre-occupation with the material as we lose illusions about the meaning of wealth, and maybe an increasingly spirit-filled and lively faith that puts God, Who is in our midst and does not forget us, first again, not just in our minds, but in our hearts and daily living.

## A PRAYER IN TIME OF DISEASE AND PANDEMIC

In times of trouble throughout history, our Church has always sought the intercession of the saints, asking them to join us in the communion of solidarity in prayer. The intercession of the saints known as the FOURTEEN HOLY HELPERS was always sought in times of disease or epidemic.

The number of people infected with COVID-19 coronavirus increases daily; outbreaks are expected to get worse before they get better. While that can be frightening, the survival rate is pretty high! Over 61,000 cases in China are already recovered; getting COVID-19 is not a death sentence, and this isn't the first time the world has seen this kind of infectious outbreak. Contrary to popular disbelief, washing your hands, staying home if you're sick, avoiding big crowds and using hand sanitizer are not the only effective mitigations of this outbreak – along with these there is PRAYER! We believe God does something in response to prayer, so please kneel and join me in a short litany of the saints, asking the intercession of the 14 Holy Helpers. After each of their names is said, please respond by saying "Pray for us ..."

St. Christopher

St. Giles

St. George

St. Blaise

St. Erasmus

St. Pantaleon

St. Vitus

St. Denis

St. Cyriacus

St. Acacius of Byzantium

St. Eustace

St. Margaret of Antioch

St. Barbara

St. Catherine of Alexandria

All Holy Men and Holy Women

WHEN AT NIGHT I GO TO SLEEP, FOURTEEN ANGELS WATCH DO KEEP. TWO MY HEAD ARE GUARDING; TWO MY FEET ARE GUIDING; TWO UPON MY RIGHT HAND, TWO UPON MY LEFT HAND; TWO WHO WARMLY COVER; TWO WHO O'ER ME HOVER; TWO TO WHOM 'TIS GIVEN, TO GUIDE MY STEPS TO HEAVEN. THROUGH CHRIST, OUR LORD. AMEN.

(The congregation was then quietly blessed with the Holy Waters that remind us of our Baptisms, the first time the Holy Spirit was sacramentally poured into our hearts, that we may remain calm in time of crisis. If you have Holy Water at home, bless yourselves and your family.)