



The Word...

*“For your sake I bear insult, and shame covers my face.
I have become an outcast to my brothers, a stranger to my children,
because zeal for your house consumes me,
and the insults of those who blaspheme you fall upon me”
(from Ps 69).*

Pondering the Word...

Many years ago, I was waiting for my car to be serviced. An older woman, dressed conservatively with a large cross around her neck, was in the waiting room. I thought she might be a nun. We struck up a conversation, and I learned she was a grandmother, and that her son and his 13-year-old daughter had moved in with her. The son’s marriage had been tumultuous, and the girl had seen way too much for her young age. She talked about her efforts to relate to her granddaughter and told me she spent time watching the girl’s favorite shows which included MTV music videos (which, at the time, were receiving a lot of press due to their explicit sexual nature). My surprise was obvious; then she said, “I have to know what I’m up against.”

What does this story have to do with today’s psalm? When we hear that “zeal for your house consumes me and the insults of you fall upon me,” we may think of Jesus cleansing the temple, or the anger that wells up in us at words of blasphemy and the defacing of sacred places or shrines; or of times we are struck to our core by militants and terrorists who protest violently against religion or kill those of other faiths.

But how do we react to the scorn and blasphemy of God’s law we witness each day? Rampant gun violence, blatant disregard for the poor, the elderly, and immigrants; racial injustice, unconscionable abuse of our planet; tacit acceptance of immoral or violent media, lying politicians and business leaders. The list goes on.

“To tolerate is to teach.” What lessons do we impart to our children when we fail to acknowledge and confront the abuse of God’s earth and God’s creatures that happens every day?

Living the Word...

I was so impressed by this woman’s willingness to engage her granddaughter where she was. She took time to discuss what they were seeing on the screen: “What do you think about the way women are being treated and portrayed in these videos? Do you think this is how people really live? How does all this violence make you feel?” The grandmother could have stormed off and taken out her disgust on her son and granddaughter, but she opted instead to expand the girl’s perspective on life and what life could be.

To live the Good News as Jesus did, we are called to engage life as it is. Yes, there may be times for ‘clearing the temple,’ but we don’t want our zeal to cause us to miss an opportunity to reach out and perhaps change a perspective or two. If you interact with teens and young adults, think about engaging them where they are (and where they are might not be where you think they are!) Even if your kids are younger, make sure to discuss your values as they pertain to everyday events. They are hearing and seeing more than you know.

Personal Reflections and Ideas: _____

*Adapted from *Come and See*, 6/25/17. (*Things don’t change much, do they?*)

Mon, Jun 22: *"You have rocked the country and split it open; repair the cracks in it, for it is tottering...you have given us stupefying wine...Give us aid against the foe, for worthless is the help of men"* (Ps 60, adapted from *Come and See*, 6/24/18). A country split open is painfully real, but it's not God who has set it on its tottering edge. It is us, and the cracks are wider than before. Who is the foe we are fighting? It would be easy to point to the leaders of countries around the world that seek to divide us, but as Aleksandr Solzhenitsin wrote: *"If only it were all so simple! If only there were evil people somewhere insidiously committing evil deeds, and it were necessary only to separate them from the rest of us...But the line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being."* **Provision: Pray for unity.** In this time of turmoil, I need to pray even more, to calm my anger and for the courage to stand up peacefully against evil. Let's not allow the stupefying wine of media or worthless men to weaken our resolve to remain civil when civility is essential. Join me today in prayer that God will help us repair the cracks that divide us so we may work for peace for all peoples and for Mother Earth.

Tue, Jun 23: *Hezekiah took the letter [from Sennacherib, king of Assyria] and read it; then he went up to the temple of the LORD, and spreading it out before him, he prayed in the LORD's presence* (2Kgs 19:9-11, 14-21, 31-36). I was taken by the image of Hezekiah's emotional prayer. While God listens to the most silent prayer of our hearts, somehow the physicality of an object, a picture, a letter spread out before the one praying makes it so real. **Provision: Make prayer real.** I remember my mom would put small pictures or words of intention in her missal she brought to mass. I am deeply moved at prayer services that feature images of those for whose causes we pray. But we can do this in our own personal prayer time too. Think about "spreading out before you," an image or an object that you want to pray for today. As you offer your prayer to God, imagine the Spirit releasing these prayers from your heart and going right to the person or cause for which you pray.

Wed, Jun 24: *"...you knit me in my mother's womb"* (Ps 139, adapted from *Come and See*, 6/21/15). I love the image of God as a knitter, working calmly and carefully with a slow, steady rhythm, paying close attention to detail. While we come into this world with everything we need to be faithful, we are far from finished products. There is still much knitting—and likely some unraveling and reknitting—to be done. **Provision: Allow yourself to be fashioned by God.** God, the divine knitter, remains patient and calm. Allow yourself to remain in God's gentle, skillful hands.

Thu, Jun 25: *"Everyone who listens to my words and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock"* (Mt 7:21-29, adapted from *Come and See*, 6/21/15). There's a monastery off the coast of Normandy in France called Mont Saint-Michel. (<https://www.abbaye-mont-saint-michel.fr/en/>). Built in the 8th century, this incredible structure is a testament to Jesus' words today. When I visited the site years ago, I was awed by the thought of what it took to build it, the toil, sweat, and suffering required of those who labored to create Saint-Michel (which is surrounded by mudflats and quicksand!). **Provision: Be willing to put in the work!** It takes effort to build on rock. And it takes time. So much time that we may never see the final product. But God sees the effort we put in to build a life solidly on God's Word...a life that can continue giving and inspiring for years after we have moved on. Spend time today considering the foundation on which you are building.

Fri, Jun 26: *"May my tongue cleave to my palate if... I do not set Jerusalem above my chief joy"* (Ps 137, Hebrew). I'm disturbed by these words. I understand the psalmist expresses the exiles' despair, away from their home and their temple. I wouldn't have a problem if, instead of "Jerusalem," the psalmist had written "the Lord." But in these days of extreme nationalism, some still confuse God with their countries and ideologies. **Provision: What is your "chief joy?"** If it is something other than God—a human institution or country, particularly those that espouse hate and exclusion—give some serious reflection and prayer to what you worship.

Sat, Jun 27: *"A centurion approached him. "Lord, my servant is lying at home paralyzed, suffering dreadfully." He said to him, "I will come and cure him"* (Mt 8:5-17, adapted from *Come and See*, 6/25/17). One aspect of this story that might get overlooked is Jesus' willingness to go the centurion's home. The centurion is a Roman and even though we learn in Luke's version he's a really good guy, he is still a Gentile. Jews are forbidden to enter Gentiles' houses. But it seems Jesus dismisses this taboo out of hand, willing to go to the servant's bedside. **Provision: To what places and situations am I willing to go? How far will I go to lend a healing hand?**