

Lenten Reflection

Saturday, February 20, 2016

By Sister Kathleen Angel, CDP



The theme of covenant permeates today's liturgy. The first reading from Deuteronomy presents the terms of the Mosaic Covenant. "You are to be a people peculiarly His own, as He promised you; and provided you keep all His commandments, He will then raise you high in praise and renown and glory..." Historically we know that Israel did not always do a good job in fulfilling its Covenant obligations. Could you say we would be much better?

Psalms 19 (Entrance Antiphon) and Psalm 119 (Responsorial Psalm) talk about our desire to fulfill our obligations. "Blessed are they whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the Lord. Oh, that I might be firm in the ways of keeping your statutes! The decrees of the Lord are steadfast; they give wisdom to the simple."

The Gospel from Matthew (part of the Sermon on the Mount) alludes to the New Covenant (see Jeremiah 31:31-34) "I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel... all, from least to greatest shall know me, says the Lord, for I will forgive their evildoing and remember their sin no more." This covenant has been extended to all peoples and sealed by the blood of Jesus Christ.

The Old Testament reference in the Gospel is to Leviticus 19, 18: "Take no revenge and cherish no grudge against your fellow countrymen. You shall love your neighbor as yourself." The notes in the *Catholic Readers Bible* state "there is no Old Testament commandment demanding hatred of one's enemies... (however) hatred of evil persons is assumed to be right." But as part of the new Covenant Jesus says, "Love you enemies, and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your heavenly Father..."

In this Gospel Jesus extends the definition of "countrymen" to all including enemies and even persecutors. To "be perfect as your heavenly Father" you must love all of creation that is the statue that is given to us.

As we pray in the Collect, "Turn our hearts to you, eternal Father; grant that, seeking always the one thing necessary and carrying out works of charity, we may be dedicated to your worship..." May this Lent be a time to see all Creation as a reflection of its Creator. May our love encompass all so that we no longer regard anyone as "enemy."