

From Sister Rea: Although you are always invited, so very few of you share your reflections or questions. Here is a reflection from a happily married woman:

I think the various styles of prayer are like communication in any relationship--sometimes you need to talk, share feelings, find deeper understandings, etc. Sometimes you just need to sit and "be" with the beloved. So wonderful to have both!

Sunday, August 1, 2010

Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Ecclesiastes 1:2, 2: 21-23; Psalm 90; Colossians 3:1-5, 9-11; Luke 12: 13-21

“Be on guard against all kinds of greeds,” Jesus warns. Then he tells the story of the man whose fields were bursting with abundance, so he decides to tear down his barns to build larger ones. From wisdom literature we hear that this is all vanity; the Latin root of “vanity” is emptiness. “Even at night, the mind does not rest.” Colossians’ author tells us to set our minds on things above, “not on things that are on earth.” This alerts us to a creeping dualism in our spirituality. For God sets God’s mind on things of earth and sends Jesus to become—forever—a person of earth, *humus*, human. Not either/or, but both/and. Colossians notes: “greed which is idolatry”. The psalmist offers us a way to pray: “Satisfy us in the morning with your faithful love...and bless the work of our hands” –and our minds.

Where does your mind go when you are not focused on some person or task? On what do you set your mind? What keeps you awake at night, restless? “All kinds of greeds” means more than money. What idols might live in your mind and heart? Ask Jesus to show you what really satisfies your cravings. Listen. Then repeat slowly the psalm-prayer above, savor it, and try to pray it frequently throughout the day.

We set our hearts on you, Jesus. You set your heart on the outcast, the neglected, the hungry, the hurt. Help us experience more deeply and share your faithful love.

Monday, August 2, 2010

Jeremiah 28:1-17; Psalm 119; Matthew 14: 13-21

The prophets Hananiah and Jeremiah have a showdown. Hananiah promises restoration and peace after the looting of the land by Babylon. Jeremiah denies this “in the presence of the priests and all the people.” Then he accuses Hananiah: “The Lord has not sent you, and you have made this people trust in a lie.” Jeremiah and all prophets might pray Psalm 119: “Do not take the word of truth utterly out of my mouth.” The fate of prophets who tell hard truths is evident in the gospel. John the Baptist has just been executed and Jesus withdrew to a deserted place by himself. His grief in solitude gives way, however, to compassion for the crowds that seek him out. He heals, he feeds them.

You, prophet by baptism, to whom do you tell hard truths? When, where, how, why? How hard to discern when to promise peace, when to confront. Discernment calls for listening to the Spirit, of letting the Spirit speak through you because, like Jesus, you have compassion. Desire for truth (as you see it), desire for compassionate words and actions. Pray for the gifts of discernment, of wisdom and compassion. Pray for journalists and any one who might skew the truth.

Forgive us for trusting in lies. Help us to find the truth. Give us a vision of the world and its needs, and the gift of being in solidarity with those who do tell truth at great cost.

Tuesday, August 3, 2010

Jeremiah 30: 1-2, 12-15, 18-22; Psalm 102; Matthew 14: 22-36

Jesus will not be interrupted except by compassion. Once his day has ended, a day of healing and feeding the crowds, he returns to solitude to pray, sending his friends away by boat. A storm batters the boat until “early in the morning Jesus came walking to them on the sea.” He calms them: “Take heart, it is I. Do not be afraid.” Peter does not believe and says: “Lord, if it is you....” If it is God, Jeremiah confesses, first the people must recognize their sin. Then God restores them, their land, their honor. “God regards the prayer of the destitute...hears the groans of prisoners, sets free those doomed to die,” promises the psalmist.

How do you feel admitting your sin? Not acts of sin (which often mean breaking a rule) but sinfulness. Fear, confusion, doubt, unfreedom may not be sin as such but the misery we all feel in such a sinful and self-centered society. How much we need God, how much we need to grasp Jesus’ hand! Name and claim your own unfreedoms and unfaithfulness. Watch him walking toward you on the waves of social sin that threaten to engulf us. Hear him speak to you: “Take heart.” Will you take his heart?

Please give us your heart, Jesus, to seek God in solitude, in storms, even in sin, where grace can more abound. Restore our planet, its land, air and water, we beg you.

Wednesday, August 4, 2010

Jeremiah 31: 1-7; Cantic from Jeremiah 31; Matthew 15: 21-28

Jeremiah’s chapter 31 details the new covenant God is making with the people who have proved unfaithful. God speaks: “I have loved you with an everlasting love, and continued my faithfulness to you.” The cantic from the same chapter sings of God’s gathering the people, and “they shall be radiant over the goodness of God.” All people will be included, as the gospel story demonstrates. At first Jesus will have nothing to do with a pagan woman whose daughter is tormented by a demon. Her faith changes (*metanoia* in Greek) his mind.

Sunday's reading told you to "set your mind." How flexible, how free is your mind to change, as Jesus' did? Ask the Spirit to show you any rigidities that need softening, any prejudices (like Jesus') that need healing. Ask for the gift of gathering and welcoming (like God) those who feel excluded from your neighborhood or church.

Thank you for your faithfulness, good God. We praise you for your goodness, your inclusive and faithful love. Thank you for healing our torments and setting us free.

Thursday, August 5, 2010

Jeremiah 31: 31-34; Psalm 51; Matthew 16: 13-23

"The days are surely coming when I will make a new covenant...No longer shall they teach one another or say to each other, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me..." Our response to such faithful love is the penitential psalm, 51: "The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken and contrite heart." In the gospel, after Peter confesses that Jesus is the Messiah, "Jesus began to show his disciples that he must...suffer..." Peter rebukes him and Jesus calls his best friend, "Satan." This from the man who tells us to call our brother a fool subjects us to the fires of Gehenna. Jesus also calls Peter a stumbling block, a *skandalon* in Greek, "setting his mind" on earthly values.

A new covenant in Jesus' blood when all will know (read, be in union with) the Lord: "I pray for them, that they may be one in us, you in me and I in them..." Jesus and Peter obviously reconciled. Who had the broken and contrite heart in their relationship? Who reached out first? Imagine it; get into that scene and watch. With whom do you need reconciliation that "all may be one"? Invite Jesus into your scene and watch him in action.

We offer you our broken and contrite hearts, Jesus, as well as our broken and stubbornly uncontrite, disunited world. Melt us, mold us, make us one.

Friday, August 6, 2010

Feast of the Transfiguration

2 Peter 1: 16-19; Psalm 97; Luke 9: 28-36

There is so little of spiritual value in the apocalyptic diatribe of 2 Peter that we use this selection instead of the alternate, Daniel 7. Both in Luke's gospel and Matthew's which we heard yesterday, after about a week, Jesus takes Peter (obviously reconciled) with James and John to the mountain to pray. Elijah and Moses speak with Jesus about his departure, in Greek his *exodus*, to be accomplished in Jerusalem. After God speaks about God's Chosen, "Jesus is found alone."

Carey Landry wrote: "We behold the glory of God, shining on the face of Jesus." Paul wrote: "God has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ." John wrote: "If you have seen me, you have seen the Father." God's glory shines through as Jesus washes feet and cooks breakfast. Where

did God's glory shine in your life yesterday? Where will you look for God's glory to shine in you and through you today?

Thank you, God of glory, that you shine through the poor, the lowly, through ordinary tasks and people. Let everyone we meet today look up and see no longer us, but Jesus alone.

Saturday, August 7, 2010

Habakkuk 1:12-2:4; Psalm 9; Matthew 17: 14-20

This prophet rebukes God! God has no business looking on evil! God's eyes are too pure! So Habakkuk says that he himself shall stand watching on the rampart to see what God has to say. God responds: "There is still a vision for the appointed time...if it seems to delay, wait for it." Jesus puts flesh on this vision, and heals a child who is out of his mind, trying to destroy himself.

For what are you watching and waiting? What is your vision? What can you do to heal the world and its children? How will you watch, pray and wait? Start right now.

Let the little children: the sick, the disabled, the rejected, the abused, the neglected, the starving – all the children of this world come to you, Jesus. We wait for your healing power.