

SATURDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT

REFLECTING ON THE READINGS FOR MASS

Our first reading is the continuation of yesterday's passage. Here Hosea paints a consoling image of divine judgement. Our gospel reading is one of several striking teachings on prayer that Luke inserts into his gospel.

FIRST READING

Hosea 5:15-6:6

6:1 Come, let us return to Yahweh. He has rent us and he will heal us; he has struck us and he will bind up our wounds;

6:2 after two days he will revive us, on the third day he will raise us up and we shall live in his presence.

6:3 He will come to us like a shower, like the rain of springtime to the earth.

6:5 This is why I have hacked them to pieces by means of the prophets, why I have killed them with words from my mouth, why my sentence will blaze forth like the dawn-

6:6 for faithful love is what pleases me, not sacrifice; knowledge of God, not burnt offerings.

GOSPEL READING

Luke 18:9-14

18:9 He spoke the following parable to some people who prided themselves on being upright and despised everyone else,

18:10 'Two men went up to the Temple to pray, one a Pharisee, the other a tax collector.

18:11 The Pharisee stood there and said this prayer to himself, "I

thank you, God, that I am not grasping, unjust, adulterous like everyone else, and particularly that I am not like this tax collector here.

18:12 I fast twice a week; I pay tithes on all I get."

18:13 The tax collector stood some distance away, not daring even to raise his eyes to heaven; but he beat his breast and said, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner."

18:14 This man, I tell you, went home again justified; the other did not. For everyone who raises himself up will be humbled, but anyone who humbles himself will be raised up.'

Our present crisis places us spiritually with the exiles speaking their prayer of conversion in the sight of the Lord.

REFLECTION

There will be some who will interpret COVID 19 as divine chastisement. Some may feel that their faith is shaken.

God instructs Hosea to say that God 'punishes' only with the word of his prophet (v.5) and that God's sentence is like the sky awakening before sunrise, a sight that every human being rejoices to see. Let's allow the springtime of God's rain to keep our spirit fresh and strong to be able to serve one another.

The simple, yet so dramatic, teaching about prayer offered in today's reading instructs us to 'let it all hang out'. At prayer be frank, fearless and humble like the tax collector. Shun our inveterate tendency to justify ourselves. Whatever my response to this difficult time, let God in on my pain or confusion and he will shine his light ... if I am patient.

