

Fourth Sunday in Lent, Year B

Numbers 21:4-9

Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22

Ephesians 2:1-10

John 3:14-21

The Holy Cross

A few decades ago it was discovered that if mirrors were placed near elevators people were more patient waiting for elevators to arrive. Complaints about slow elevators dropped, and people become more sociable.

When people see reflections of their not-so-desirable public self, they almost immediately change their attitudes. They somehow reach down closer to their true selves, and allow those characteristics to come to the surface. Unless they're really buried in a dysfunctional ego, they would prefer the public to see their nicer qualities.

In today's world, much of what we do in public is recorded by cameras. If we look foolish enough, the pictures make their way to a Facebook posting, YouTube, or even national television. So we learn to be more careful when we're out in public. One could argue that it's an invasion of privacy, but it's also a good electronic conscience.

As the Hebrews struggled their way through the desert, they would occasionally get a little testy waiting for their "elevator" to take them from the lower floors of scarcity and discomfort to the heights of milk and honey. They would be like poisonous serpents, biting at each other, to the point where their spirits began to die. Their bitterness was destroying themselves from the inside.

Moses didn't have mirrors he could use to reflect the danger of these attitudes, but he knew that the symbol of their behavioral ugliness could be represented by a serpent. So he made one of bronze, and put it up on a pole for all to see. When a people looked upon the serpent, it would remind them of what they were doing to themselves, and they would (hopefully) change, and live.

Hundreds of years later, Jesus predicted that he would eventually be arrested, abused, tried unfairly, and crucified on a wooden cross. This would happen at the hands of people who were in power, people who had a lot to lose if Jesus was successful in his message and mission. Jesus was bringing equality, equity, fairness, humility, justice, peace, and most of all, love. It could ruin the current status quo – it could cause a redistribution of wealth, equal opportunity for all people, equal say in government, a cleaner environment, and inner peace. Those in power decided Jesus had to be stopped!

So, they plotted against Jesus, arrested him, abused him, tried him, and executed him on a wooden cross in a display of public humiliation. Mankind had sunk to its lowest egoic levels, and was now reflected by this broken man hanging from the cross beam on a pole. It was the mirror of what we can become without the Presence of God in our lives.

Perhaps, if we look upon this mirror of broken humanity, it will shock us into awareness. We may realize what we are capable of in our darkest self. We may discover that we don't want to be like that, so we begin to change. We begin to dig deeper into our souls, looking for the goodness that was put there by our Creator, so we stop our bickering, stop our cheating, stop our power-grabbing, stop our waste, stop our injustice, stop our prejudice, stop our feelings of inferiority, stop our feelings of superiority – we may actually start loving each other as Christ has loved us.

This is the beginning of salvation and the start of eternal life – to lose our false lives, and begin to live our real lives. And all because of the Holy Cross.

Blessing to all,
Br. Daniel-Joseph, CG