



Racine Dominicans
Committed to Truth + Compelled to Justice

PRAY, PONDER, PREACH AND PRACTICE THE WORD OF GOD

Facilitated by Racine Dominican Preaching Committee

April 2022

The Two Trees

Lent is more than half over. We are approaching Holy Week. The trees are starting to burst with buds. So, let's reflect on trees...two of them.

The first is made of two crossbeams. It's called the cross. It's an instrument of execution, one of the most painful invented by humans. The victim slowly bleeds to death while suffocating. The weight of the torso so pulls the body downward that the lungs cannot fill with air.

Why are we reflecting on such a hideous image? Because our God, in the person of the Word-in-our-flesh, chose deliberately to suffer death this way. Not by firing squad, not by beheading.

Now why, you say, would the God of heaven and earth chose such a thing? Because history reveals that we do the most dastardly things to one another. This God-who-is-unconditional-love, is making a statement. This God has a final Word for us: "No matter what you do to one another, no matter how full of despair you are, no matter... I will be there loving you, and my love will win over all the sin you can invent."

It all began in a garden. There were two trees. One was the Tree of Life, the other the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God said not to eat of the fruit...maybe it was not ripe? It would 'kill' them. They were tempted and ate it anyway. Their relationship with God died, and they hid feeling the nakedness of themselves without the garment of God's affection. All of history unfolded, wracked with sorrow, evil, abuse, war, and despair. The 'fruit' had indeed poisoned humans.

So God started over with an antidote. There was a garden. There was a second tree in the form of a cross. God's beloved Word was the fruit on this tree. The Word was hushed to whispers, so his Body spoke... blood pouring out. Now we are told, "Take and eat...this is my Body given for you...I am the healing of your poison...I am the Life to wipe away your death..." The cross is Love's answer to our sin. Catherine of Siena heard God saying it this way in her Dialogue:



*Imagine a circle traced on the ground,
and in its center a tree sprouting...*

*Think of the soul as a tree made for love
and living only by love...*

*The circle in which this tree's root, the soul's love, must grow
is true knowledge of herself, knowledge that is joined to me,
who like the circle have either beginning nor end.*

Dialogue, 10.

Thank you to Associate Lea Koesterer for the April Reflections.

Sunday, April 3, 2022 Reflection

Isaiah 43:19 “Behold, I am doing a new thing, now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?”

Clearly, God doesn't want us to become hidebound and afraid of new ideas. God expects us to have the courage and faith to step into the unknown.”...I am doing a new thing...” and so can you. You can “spring forth “ now onto God's new pathways. Old ways stagnate and lead us nowhere. Writer Octavia Butler wrote that “God is change”. Change is constant, as is God. The Sufi mystic, Rumi, illustrates being guided by God in his poem:

“Who Makes These Changes?
I shoot an arrow right. It lands left.
I ride after a deer and find myself chased by a hog.
I plot to get what I want and end up in prison.
I dig pits to trap others and fall in.
I should be suspicious of what I want.”

Sunday, April 10, 2022 Reflection

Luke 19:33 “Why are you untying the colt?” And they said, “The Lord has need of it.”

They welcomed him with palms upraised to praise
To catch his notice, or was it to ask him a question?
He came among them with his own palms bringing the good news
He himself a balm for the afflicted.
“I have been walking so far, bring me a donkey or a car.”
He has hitched a ride with us.
He offers you your opportunity to carry him in your wagon.
Let him show you the way through the traffic of this hectic world.
We are the Welcome Wagon, with own own palms outstretched to give or to beg.
Jesus tells us that it is enough to bring what we are to the feast.
And he holds each of us in the palm of his hand.

Sunday, April 17, 2022 Reflection

Mary Magdalene, a woman doing her loving duty, was the first to arrive at Jesus' empty tomb. I suspect that she was accompanied by some of her women friends. Upon finding the tomb empty, she ran to report the theft of Jesus' body to Peter. She didn't have the hubris to think she could solve the mystery by herself. She diligently avoided disturbing the evidence. She ran for help. Peter and the disciple who came with him were clueless and went home, but Mary remained. Her steadfastness was rewarded by the sight of angels and a conversation with the Risen Christ. God is ready for us when we run to him for help. May we persist in seeking the Risen Christ.

Sunday, April 24, 2022 Reflection

John 20:23 “Who is it that carries the burden when sins are ‘retained’? God's mercy and forgiveness is infinite. God forgives the sinner. If we do not forgive, then the burden of retention is on us. If we withhold forgiveness, it is we who bear the weight of the sins by retaining them. Forgiveness isn't usually one instantaneous decision. It is a process that can take some thoughtful and prayerful time. Already, we each have the power to forgive, although it can be challenging when the offender doesn't think they need forgiveness. The knowledge that God's forgiveness prevails can guide our own hearts.