

Lenten Reflections

March 17, 2020



St Francis Receiving the Stigmata – El Greco – Public Domain

<https://art.thewalters.org/detail/6457/saint-francis-receiving-the-stigmata-2/>

Even the strongest of faith can be tested, and today's reading stands to prove just that. Having faith in God requires us to believe that he has our best interests at heart, and that he is always working on our behalf. This becomes increasingly difficult when we know what has been promised to us, yet we cannot feel God's presence in our lives. That feeling of helplessness and hopelessness can cause a fierce internal struggle: Can we trust God to deliver on the promises he has made with us, regardless of the difficulties we face. While the obvious answer is yes, in practice it is quite difficult to remain faithful.

The cry of Azariah addresses this very issue— he knows what God has planned for his life, yet he urges God to remember the covenant because his life seems especially bleak at that moment. Interestingly enough, Azariah has enough faith to turn back to God with his concern, instead of allowing his uncertainty to divide the two. In his moment of confusion, he looked to God for understanding, even though he attributed this feeling to, what he perceives to be, God's inaction.

From this story I draw two conclusions. The first being that it is natural to grow frustrated when promises do not come to fruition in a timely manner. We often set our own timetables for our Earthly lives, and having such structure helps us to conform better to our society. Such constraints do not influence God's behavior— God will uphold God's word as God sees fit. While this is frustrating, it is a far more productive way to consider the timing of God's intervention. The second conclusion that I draw can be applied to all relationships—if you are confused about something, go to the source. Azariah could not comprehend how God still hadn't delivered him, so he approached God directly to communicate his fear. Such direct communication is necessary in understanding and having faith in God's plan for our lives.

Rose McNeil, English, Class of 2021

Tuesday of the Third Week of Lent

Lectionary: 238

Reading 1 [DN 3:25, 34-43](#)

Azariah stood up in the fire and prayed aloud:

“For your name’s sake, O Lord, do not deliver us up forever,
or make void your covenant.

Do not take away your mercy from us,
for the sake of Abraham, your beloved,
Isaac your servant, and Israel your holy one,
To whom you promised to multiply their offspring
like the stars of heaven,
or the sand on the shore of the sea.

For we are reduced, O Lord, beyond any other nation,
brought low everywhere in the world this day
because of our sins.

We have in our day no prince, prophet, or leader,
no burnt offering, sacrifice, oblation, or incense,
no place to offer first fruits, to find favor with you.
But with contrite heart and humble spirit
let us be received;

As though it were burnt offerings of rams and bullocks,
or thousands of fat lambs,

So let our sacrifice be in your presence today
as we follow you unreservedly;
for those who trust in you cannot be put to shame.

And now we follow you with our whole heart,
we fear you and we pray to you.

Do not let us be put to shame,
but deal with us in your kindness and great mercy.
Deliver us by your wonders,
and bring glory to your name, O Lord.”

Responsorial Psalm [25:4-5AB, 6 AND 7BC, 8-9](#)

R. (6a) **Remember your mercies, O Lord.**

Your ways, O LORD, make known to me;
teach me your paths,
Guide me in your truth and teach me,
for you are God my savior.

R. **Remember your mercies, O Lord.**

Remember that your compassion, O LORD,
and your kindness are from of old.
In your kindness remember me,
because of your goodness, O LORD.

R. Remember your mercies, O Lord.

Good and upright is the LORD;
thus he shows sinners the way.
He guides the humble to justice,
he teaches the humble his way.

R. Remember your mercies, O Lord.

Verse Before The Gospel [JL 2:12-13](#)

Even now, says the LORD,
return to me with your whole heart;
for I am gracious and merciful.

Gospel [MT 18:21-35](#)

Peter approached Jesus and asked him,
“Lord, if my brother sins against me,
how often must I forgive him?
As many as seven times?”
Jesus answered, “I say to you, not seven times but seventy-seven times.
That is why the Kingdom of heaven may be likened to a king
who decided to settle accounts with his servants.
When he began the accounting,
a debtor was brought before him who owed him a huge amount.
Since he had no way of paying it back,
his master ordered him to be sold,
along with his wife, his children, and all his property,
in payment of the debt.
At that, the servant fell down, did him homage, and said,
‘Be patient with me, and I will pay you back in full.’
Moved with compassion the master of that servant
let him go and forgave him the loan.
When that servant had left, he found one of his fellow servants
who owed him a much smaller amount.
He seized him and started to choke him, demanding,
‘Pay back what you owe.’
Falling to his knees, his fellow servant begged him,
‘Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.’
But he refused.
Instead, he had him put in prison
until he paid back the debt.
Now when his fellow servants saw what had happened,
they were deeply disturbed, and went to their master
and reported the whole affair.
His master summoned him and said to him, ‘You wicked servant!
I forgave you your entire debt because you begged me to.

Should you not have had pity on your fellow servant,
as I had pity on you?’
Then in anger his master handed him over to the torturers
until he should pay back the whole debt.
So will my heavenly Father do to you,
unless each of you forgives your brother from your heart.”