

Lenten Reflections

March 6, 2020



St Francis Receiving the Stigmata – El Greco – Public Domain

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

I was teaching a religion course a few years ago and started talking to the class about the characteristics attributed to God in the Christian faith; describing God as all-powerful, all-knowing, all-good. In thinking of God as all-knowing, the class began discussing how God knows all that has happened and all that will happen as God is not bound by time but rather, exists outside of it. This notion of God being outside of time stayed with me.

Every year during Easter, we are called to contemplate and reflect on Jesus' death and resurrection and what that means for all of us as children of God. Jesus did not sin and yet was crucified so that we may be forgiven. He did so we may have life. It is a powerful moment that happened over 2000 years ago and we remember it every Lenten season. For many Catholics though, it can be easy to forget how crucial this event was once Easter has passed. And yet, in thinking of how God is outside of time, I see it as Jesus dying on the cross for me, for us, every minute of every day. God continues to want to save us; God continues to love us to the point of death every moment despite how many times we may turn from Him. God knows of all that each of us have done and still chooses to send His only Son to save us over and over again.

In the same way that God chooses us every day and calls us near, every moment is an invitation for us to turn from sin and move closer to Him. There is no sin too great, no distance too far that would keep God from wanting us, desiring us, dying for us. We are called back to Him through the cross today, tomorrow, and every day of our lives.

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Friday of the First Week of Lent

Lectionary: 228

Reading 1 [EZ 18:21-28](#)

Thus says the Lord GOD:

If the wicked man turns away from all the sins he committed,
if he keeps all my statutes and does what is right and just,
he shall surely live, he shall not die.

None of the crimes he committed shall be remembered against him;
he shall live because of the virtue he has practiced.

Do I indeed derive any pleasure from the death of the wicked?
says the Lord GOD.

Do I not rather rejoice when he turns from his evil way
that he may live?

And if the virtuous man turns from the path of virtue to do evil,
the same kind of abominable things that the wicked man does,
can he do this and still live?

None of his virtuous deeds shall be remembered,
because he has broken faith and committed sin;
because of this, he shall die.

You say, "The LORD's way is not fair!"

Hear now, house of Israel:

Is it my way that is unfair, or rather, are not your ways unfair?

When someone virtuous turns away from virtue to commit iniquity, and dies,
it is because of the iniquity he committed that he must die.

But if the wicked, turning from the wickedness he has committed,
does what is right and just,
he shall preserve his life;
since he has turned away from all the sins that he committed,
he shall surely live, he shall not die.

Responsorial Psalm [130:1-2, 3-4, 5-7A, 7BC-8](#)

R. (3) If you, O Lord, mark iniquities, who can stand?

Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD;
LORD, hear my voice!

Let your ears be attentive
to my voice in supplication.

R. If you, O Lord, mark iniquities, who can stand?

If you, O LORD, mark iniquities,
LORD, who can stand?

But with you is forgiveness,
that you may be revered.

R. If you, O Lord, mark iniquities, who can stand?

I trust in the LORD;

my soul trusts in his word.
My soul waits for the LORD
more than sentinels wait for the dawn.
Let Israel wait for the LORD.

R. If you, O Lord, mark iniquities, who can stand?

For with the LORD is kindness
and with him is plenteous redemption;
And he will redeem Israel
from all their iniquities.

R. If you, O Lord, mark iniquities, who can stand?

Verse Before The Gospel [EZ 18:31](#)

Cast away from you all the crimes you have committed, says the LORD,
and make for yourselves a new heart and a new spirit.

Gospel [MT 5:20-26](#)

Jesus said to his disciples:

“I tell you,
unless your righteousness surpasses that
of the scribes and Pharisees,
you will not enter into the Kingdom of heaven.

“You have heard that it was said to your ancestors,
You shall not kill; and whoever kills will be liable to judgment.

But I say to you, whoever is angry with his brother
will be liable to judgment,
and whoever says to his brother, Raqa,
will be answerable to the Sanhedrin,
and whoever says, ‘You fool,’ will be liable to fiery Gehenna.

Therefore, if you bring your gift to the altar,
and there recall that your brother
has anything against you,
leave your gift there at the altar,
go first and be reconciled with your brother,
and then come and offer your gift.

Settle with your opponent quickly while on the way to court.
Otherwise your opponent will hand you over to the judge,
and the judge will hand you over to the guard,
and you will be thrown into prison.

Amen, I say to you,
you will not be released until you have paid the last penny.”