

Lenten Reflections

March 12, 2020



St Francis Receiving the Stigmata – El Greco – Public Domain

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

Lent has always been my favorite liturgical season and though it is seemingly surrounded by more sadness, solemnity and sorrow than the spirit of joy that surrounds the Advent season, I have always believed that that has everything to do with perspective. Lent makes us do the “hard stuff.” The deep, soul-piercing, introspective search for our flaws and our shortcomings; Lent makes us look at ourselves and asks us not what we are doing well or what good we have done, but asks us without hesitation and without mercy: *What more could you be doing for God?*

It is this thought that struck me as I read the opening lines of today’s first reading, about how we who *seek our strength in the flesh* and *whose hearts turn away from the Lord*, are cursed. And while ours is not a vengeful or punishing God that would literally curse us, I believe the curse the reading refers to is in not trusting God, but in trusting the flesh we would be limiting ourselves to this world, the mortal world, rather than the world that was promised to us in Heaven. In doing this, in accepting our flesh and believing that we are only as strong as our human bodies allow us to be, we accept the comfort that is this world and are blinded from the greater destiny set out for us – sainthood, a life in the image and likeness of God, and a life built and fueled by a strong faith and strong soul.

Lent is a time where we are called to move beyond that comfort. Where the fasting, the praying, the soul-searching, the questioning are calling us to shrug off the comforts of not only the flesh, but our belief in our invincibility and our human strength and surrender that all to God. May each of us accept this call, accept that God calls us to greater heights and believe that He will equip us as He did Jesus and the disciples. And may we remember that the limits placed on our flesh are nothing in the face of God. We are limitless.

Pax et bonum.

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Thursday of the Second Week of Lent
Lectionary: 233

Reading 1 [JER 17:5-10](#)

Thus says the LORD:

Cursed is the man who trusts in human beings,
who seeks his strength in flesh,
whose heart turns away from the LORD.

He is like a barren bush in the desert
that enjoys no change of season,
But stands in a lava waste,
a salt and empty earth.

Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD,
whose hope is the LORD.

He is like a tree planted beside the waters
that stretches out its roots to the stream:
It fears not the heat when it comes,
its leaves stay green;
In the year of drought it shows no distress,
but still bears fruit.

More tortuous than all else is the human heart,
beyond remedy; who can understand it?
I, the LORD, alone probe the mind
and test the heart,
To reward everyone according to his ways,
according to the merit of his deeds.

Responsorial Psalm [1:1-2, 3, 4 AND 6](#)

R. (40:5a) **Blessed are they who hope in the Lord.**

Blessed the man who follows not
the counsel of the wicked
Nor walks in the way of sinners,
nor sits in the company of the insolent,
But delights in the law of the LORD
and meditates on his law day and night.

R. **Blessed are they who hope in the Lord.**

He is like a tree
planted near running water,
That yields its fruit in due season,
and whose leaves never fade.
Whatever he does, prospers.

R. **Blessed are they who hope in the Lord.**

Not so, the wicked, not so;
they are like chaff which the wind drives away.

For the LORD watches over the way of the just,
but the way of the wicked vanishes.

R. **Blessed are they who hope in the Lord.**

Verse Before The Gospel [LK 8:15](#)

Blessed are they who have kept the word with a generous heart
and yield a harvest through perseverance.

Gospel [LK 16:19-31](#)

Jesus said to the Pharisees:

“There was a rich man who dressed in purple garments and fine linen
and dined sumptuously each day.

And lying at his door was a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores,
who would gladly have eaten his fill of the scraps
that fell from the rich man’s table.

Dogs even used to come and lick his sores.

When the poor man died,

he was carried away by angels to the bosom of Abraham.

The rich man also died and was buried,
and from the netherworld, where he was in torment,
he raised his eyes and saw Abraham far off
and Lazarus at his side.

And he cried out, ‘Father Abraham, have pity on me.
Send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue,
for I am suffering torment in these flames.’

Abraham replied, ‘My child,
remember that you received what was good during your lifetime
while Lazarus likewise received what was bad;
but now he is comforted here, whereas you are tormented.
Moreover, between us and you a great chasm is established
to prevent anyone from crossing
who might wish to go from our side to yours
or from your side to ours.’

He said, ‘Then I beg you, father, send him
to my father’s house,

for I have five brothers, so that he may warn them,
lest they too come to this place of torment.’

But Abraham replied, ‘They have Moses and the prophets.
Let them listen to them.’

He said, ‘Oh no, father Abraham,
but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.’

Then Abraham said,
‘If they will not listen to Moses and the prophets,

neither will they be persuaded
if someone should rise from the dead.”