

Second Sunday of Lent C  
Pray  
Hearing God's Voice in Prayer

Did you notice this evening/morning that the scripture readings end with the phrase "The Word of the Lord" or "The Gospel, that is, the Good News of the Lord?" The phrases are put there to remind us that God speaks to us through the scriptures – they are his word, his voice. Were you distracted while the scriptures were being read and hence missed part of God's word to us? Have you ever tried reading the scripture readings before you come to mass so that you are familiar with the readings and hence know what they are even when you are distracted? You can do this alone or with other people. It is fun to share God's word.

On this second Sunday of our Lenten Message series devoted to prayer, the scriptures speak to us about different types of prayer. I will also offer my insights of the second chapter of Fr. Ron Rolheiser's book on prayer entitled "Hearing God's Voice in Prayers."

The first reading from the Old Testament Book of Genesis focuses in on a particular form of prayer called an oath. The reading describes the oath between God and Abraham. This oath is similar to the one made by couples in their marriage vows, or by all of us when we renew our baptismal promises.

In the second reading we find St. Paul praying for the Christian community in Philippi. He prays that in the midst of persecution that they may remain firm in the faith. In the gospel reading we find Jesus on a mountain top with three of his apostles. As Rolheiser reminds us in his book, mountain tops were seen as sacred places since they were close to the heavens where the Jews believed that God dwelled.

Rolheiser reminds us that we find Jesus in the scriptures praying in many different places, sometimes alone and sometime with others. He prays when he is filled with joy as well as when he is suffering physical or spiritual pain. I have often thought that if Jesus the Son of God thought it was important to pray why won't I? How about you? Does the fact that Jesus prayed challenge you to pray?

Rolheiser raises the question of how do we hear the voice of God when we are surrounded by so many voices in our world today? He answers his own question by reminding us that Jesus leaves us the wonderful metaphor of the "Good Shepherd." Using this metaphor Jesus tells us that just as sheep recognize the voice of their shepherd and follow him, so his followers recognize his voice when they experience good in their lives. In other words, we find God in what is good – since God, by definition, is good.

The Jesuits give us a form of prayer called "examen" to discover the good, to discover God in our lives. A couple of times each day they take a 10- to 15 minutes to reflect on their experience of the good that day. I do this every evening before I go to bed. I reflect on my whole day from the beginning to end and ask myself "what experiences of good did have today?" Even in the worst of days I always have at least one good experience to reflect upon. In discovering the good in my daily life I discover God active in my daily life as well. This is a form of prayer that couples and families can use.

Rolheiser reminds us that faith in God doesn't remove all anxiety from our lives or preserve us from bad things happening to us. What faith gives us is the assurance that God is good, that God can be trusted, that God won't forget us. Praying is a way of strengthening our faith. How is your prayer life going this Lent?

