

Growth in Courage

2 Samuel 1:17-27

Today, listen to the voice of the Lord.

How is he calling you this summer?

You are with David, preparing for kingship. Like David, your nemesis the devil, has been defeated by the grace of God. Sloth is a kind of ambivalence about spiritual discipline and one's duties, while the remedy is a sharp conscience.

Pray that the Lord draws you out of sloth to embrace the kingly mission he has given you. Pray for the grace of freedom and humility for all Exodus Men, just as they are praying for you.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Lord and Master of my life, spare me from the spirit of indifference, despair, lust for power, and idle chatter. Instead, bestow on me, your servant, the spirit of integrity, humility, patience, and love. Yes, O Lord and King, let me see my own sins and not judge my brothers and sisters; for you are blessed forever and ever. Amen.

A Reading from the Second Book of Samuel

And David lamented with this lamentation over Saul and Jonathan his son, and he said it should be taught to the people of Judah; behold, it is written in the Book of Jashar. He said:

"Thy glory, O Israel, is slain upon thy high places! How are the mighty fallen! Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Ashkelon; lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised exult. Ye mountains of Gilboa, let there be no dew or rain upon you, nor upsurging of the deep! For there the shield of the mighty was defiled, the shield of Saul, not anointed with oil. From the blood of the slain, from the fat of the mighty, the bow of Jonathan turned not back, and the sword of Saul returned not empty. Saul and Jonathan, beloved and lovely! In life and in death they were not divided; they were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions. Ye daughters of Israel, weep over Saul, who clothed you daintily in scarlet, who put ornaments of gold upon your apparel. How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle! Jonathan lies slain upon thy high places. I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan; very pleasant have you been to me; your love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women. How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished!"

Reflection

Immediately after David had the Amalekite who killed Saul and Jonathan executed, he sings this song that he commands to be taught to the people of Israel. Nowhere do we get the sense that David is relieved that Saul is dead or proud that he has come out victorious and is now the king. He appears to have no grudge. Instead, he continues to honor his predecessor

and honor the Lord who anointed Saul.

You could imagine how down and demotivated David could have become thinking about the trials Saul inflicted upon him. But David is courageous. He acts decisively and commandingly. What fosters his courage is his sense of honor. This is a notion that we have lost in our society. And it is no wonder that our society is full of so many cowards. Honor arises from a sense that a certain task or goal is noble and, further, that sacrifice is necessary for attaining it. But we no longer think that certain tasks are universally noble, and we have widespread mistrust or disdain for institutions.

What we desperately need today are men who are alive and alert to what is right and wrong, what is true and false, and what is honorable and dishonorable. David exemplifies the man whose moral sense is tuned by the honor of God. If we are to remain steadfast and courageous, while avoiding complacency, we must grow in the honor of the Lord. How can we do this? We need to have dedicated times of meditating upon the Lord's goodness and the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. The rosary is a great tool in this regard. But you can incorporate reflection like this into your holy hour too.

Consider especially that the cross was not dishonorable for Christ, but in fact the greatest glorification of God. Consider that love and self-sacrifice are more powerful and noble than brute force and brash self-confidence. It takes more courage to sacrifice yourself for someone else than it does to manipulate circumstances so that you never have to be inconvenienced or disadvantaged. In your holy hour today, contemplate the personal cross of self-sacrifice that you are being called to.

Now place yourself before God, and converse with him.

Day 6 Action Item

Observe Friday of Ember of Week.

Fridays are days of penance year-round. All Exodus Men take cold showers and fast as a common baseline discipline for each Friday. Every Friday puts the Crucifixion before our minds as we prepare for the celebration of the Resurrection each Sunday. This is the Friday of Ember Week following Pentecost, which strengthens today's connection to penance. Bring a greater focus on thanksgiving and reparation into your prayer and disciplines today. Pray for priests as well, a common intention for Ember Days.

Our need for conversion never ends. We must continue to take up our Cross every day so that in dying to ourselves, we may truly live with Christ. The Cross and Resurrection remain fixed points of the spiritual life: the paradox of life growing in us through death. Each Friday points us to the Cross, while each Sunday allows us to enter into the life of the Resurrection.