

## Homily

03.07.2019 – Thursday after Ash Wednesday – Homily

Dt 30:15-20 Lk 9:22-25



As we have started the “Season of Lent” – “Season of Grace” the question each one of us has to ask is, ‘how do we live in such a way that we become fully alive as human beings here and now?’ That is also the thrust of today’s first reading from the Book of Deuteronomy. The author puts before the people two ways, the way that leads to death and the way that leads to fullness of life in the present. The call of the reading, as of much of the Jewish Scriptures, is ‘Choose life’. Choosing life amounts to choosing God, loving the Lord your God and following God’s ways, God’s commandments and laws. Because we are made in the image of God and belong to God, the path of life is the path that God sets before us in his commandments.

In the gospel reading this morning, Jesus speaks about the need for us to renounce ourselves. Self-renunciation is often seen as something negative and contrary to the value of self-realization. Self-renunciation is more difficult today than in the past because we live in a culture, which encourages us to indulge ourselves. We can easily think of self-renunciation as something negative.

Yet, the giving up, the letting go, is always with a view to choosing more fully the life that the Lord is always holding out to us. The first

reading puts it very positively, ‘Choose life’. Yet, Jesus does not advocate self-renunciation as an end in itself. In the gospel reading, Jesus’ primary call is to follow him, which is something completely positive. He goes on to declare that following him will often require a willingness to renounce ourselves. ‘If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself and take up his cross every day’.

In other words, if we are to say a wholehearted ‘yes’ to the way of Jesus, to his values and attitudes, this will often entail saying ‘no’ to other options that are not compatible with his way. ‘Yes’ to, would sometimes require us to renounce our own convenience and comfort, and, maybe, even our own personal well-being.

In today’s gospel reading, we read ‘What gain is it for a person to have won the whole world and to have lost or ruined his very self?’ Jesus seems to be saying that it is possible to gain a great deal of what the world often considers important but in the process to lose something that is even more important, namely our true selves, our deepest selves, the self that is made in the image and likeness of God. We will often have to die to what the world considers important. In that sense, walking in the Lord’s way will often entail a loss.

Each day of Lent we can ask ourselves, ‘What does it mean for me to choose life today?’ ‘What do I need to renounce to follow the Lord more closely along the path to true life?’

**Let us pray:**

Lord, as I enter into this Lenten season, give me the grace I need to look at my priorities. Help me to honestly discern that which is the most fundamental and central driving motivation of my life. Help me to choose You above all else so that You will help everything in my life to become ordered in accord with Your holy will.

**Jesus, I trust in You.**

