

Reflection for Thursday 3rd Week of Lent

Jer 7:23-28 Luke 11:14-23

In today's responsorial psalm the psalmist says to God's people: 'O that today you would listen to his voice. Harden not your hearts.'

We see an example of hardness of hearts in the First Reading. Jeremiah speaks of the stubbornness and refusal of the people to listen to what God was saying to them through the numerous prophets he sent them.

What we need to do is to ask, how far do these words of Jeremiah apply to us? How carefully do we listen? How well do we carry out the will of God in our lives? How clearly can we discern the presence of God in our daily situations?

And in the Gospel, we see that same stubbornness of heart in the refusal of the religious leaders to believe in Jesus. What is at stake is the source of Jesus' healing power. While the ordinary people recognized the God-given nature of Jesus' power, the religious leaders perversely claimed that he was in league with the devil.

The slanderous behaviour of the religious leaders calls for examination of conscience on our part. How often do we tend to think the worst of other people? How often do we deliberately impute low motives to someone we dislike? How often do we repeat the slanderous and malicious tale and destroy people's reputation?

Instead of acknowledging that God was powerfully at work in the life of Jesus, they declared that Satan was at work in his life.

They were calling good evil. Jesus declared that his healing work was done through the finger of God. God was at work in Jesus and some of his own contemporaries could not see it.

We can all be blind to the working of God among us. We are graced in some way by God, and we hardly notice it. The Lord blesses us and rather than recognize the blessing and giving thanks for it, we focus on what we do not have or what is wrong in our lives. We need to keep on praying for the gift to see as Jesus sees. Jesus teaches us to see with generous and hopeful eyes. When we see in this way, then, in the words of Paul, we will be inspired to give thanks in all circumstances.

To adopt a hard-hearted attitude is to destroy oneself. A hard heart is a closed heart, so it can't receive. A hard heart inevitably becomes a barren heart. From a spiritual point of view, hardness of heart is one of the worst things that can happen to anyone.

It is to the heart that the call of God comes. God longs for our hearts and is continually calling us into communion with him and with one another.

'Harden not your hearts,' says the psalmist. We would do well to heed those words. Jesus came, not just to purify our hearts, but to soften and warm them, so that they might be able to receive the word of God.

Softened by God's grace and warmed by God's love, the seed of God's Word can take root in our hearts.

May God in his gently mercy, guide our wayward hearts. Amen
Fr Patrick