

October 12, 2023



Center for Spiritual Development

Daily Reflections

Image by Christine Sponchia

TO STAND IN THE HEALING RAYS OF GOD'S JUSTICE

By Fr. David C. Robinson, S.J.

An Excerpt from Today's First Reading

You have defied me in word, says the Lord, yet you ask, "What have we spoken against you?" You have said, "It is vain to serve God, and what do we profit by keeping his command, and going about in penitential dress in awe of the Lord of hosts? Rather must we call the proud blessed; for indeed evildoers prosper, and even tempt God with impunity." Then they who fear the Lord spoke with one another, and the Lord listened attentively.... They shall be mine, says the Lord of hosts, my own special possession, on the day I take action. And I will have compassion on them, as a man has compassion on his son who serves him. Then you will again see the distinction between the just and the wicked; between the one who serves God, and the one who does not serve him. For lo, the day is coming, blazing like an oven, when all the proud and all evildoers will be stubble, and the day that is coming will set them on fire, leaving them neither root nor branch, says the Lord of hosts. But for you who fear my name, there will arise the sun of justice with its healing

Reflection

After their release from the Babylonian Captivity, the people of Israel continued on their historical path of wandering from the way of God's covenant. Their gratitude for God's liberating presence and blessing during their return home and the rebuilding of the temple faded into a disregard for the priestly ministry of the altar, and a neglect of their call to follow divine justice. Malachi, the last of the Old Testament prophets, came to chastise them for their lack of faithfulness, and to exhort them to return to God's ways that had made them a people of destiny. In the opening lines of chapter 3, we encounter the poetic prophecy of God's promise of renewed healing, and the messianic messenger who will purify their lives like a refiner's fire: **"I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come, says the Lord Almighty.... he will be like a refiner's fire or a launderer's soap. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; he will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver.... See if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it" (3:1-3).** After centuries, we can still be inspired by the tender passion of a God who will not surrender his wayward children to their weaknesses. Their salvation resides forever in his heart.

However, the people of the covenant are also measured in the scale of divine justice, which will judge the arrogant, the deceitful, and the self-inflated members of the community. As the Hebrews discover throughout their centuries of exile and political collapse, prideful neglect of the guiding love and wisdom of God leads to disaster on all fronts. Yet, the blessings of God are still within their grasp, if their hearts only turn to receive them: **The day is coming, blazing like an oven, when all the proud and all evildoers will be stubble, and the day that is coming will set them on fire, leaving them neither root nor branch, says the Lord of hosts. But for you who fear my name, there will arise the sun of justice with its healing rays.**

In our contemporary context, the situation is not much different. Our religious traditions and spirituality remind us regularly of the endless bounties of love which surround us. Nonetheless, we are all too often lured from that glorious

horizon, hypnotized by the vanities of our own desires and ambitions. As a result, we fall under the 'veil of judgment.' It does not require a vengeful angel with a fiery sword to break our den of illusion. We are simply undone, unless we are moved to return to the one who is our only source of true blessing and fulfillment. In the freedom of surrender we can once again revere the divine truth of a love that can crack the dark clouds of our indifference or neglect, and open the heavens to reveal **the sun of justice with its healing rays.**



Remnants of the Woolsey Fire
Photo by Fr. David C. Robinson, S.J.

For Pondering

- How do you experience God's presence in your day-to-day as you seek to remain faithful to the calls of compassion, community, and love?
 - Are there aspects of your life that tend to obscure your connection to a faith that moves you to service, and freedom to share what is yours?
 - Have you experienced the 'hard learning' of God's justice, where the fruits of some efforts only produce the sour harvest of the selfish motives that inspired them?
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