

Daily Reflections



Center for Spiritual Development

FROM MY FLESH I SHALL SEE GOD

By Fr. David C. Robinson, SJ

Today's First Reading

Job said: Pity me, pity me, O you my friends, for the hand of God has struck me! Why do you hound me as though you were divine, and insatiably prey upon me? Oh, would that my words were written down! Would that they were inscribed in a record: That with an iron chisel and with lead they were cut in the rock forever! But as for me, I know that my Vindicator lives, and that he will at last stand forth upon the dust; Whom I myself shall see: my own eyes, not another's, shall behold him. And from my flesh I shall see God; my inmost being is consumed with longing.

JOB 19:21-27

Reflection

As Job's plaintive cries continue in the company of his comrades, they chastise him for his blasphemy in questioning the outcomes of the divine will. They

insist that only the ‘wicked’ suffer before God. As Job searches the deepest recesses of his own grief and despair, he comes to the recognition that, at the core of his life, he chooses his covenant with God. While his grieving is not quenched, his soul recognizes the true source of his very being. He embraces the One who had always embraced him, realizing that his justification does not reside in legal validation, but in loving mercy. Though he has cried out with desperate anguish, he finally proclaims: **as for me, I know that my Vindicator lives, and that he will at last stand forth upon the dust; Whom I myself shall see: my own eyes, not another’s, shall behold him. And from my flesh I shall see God; my inmost being is consumed with longing.**

The constant unraveling of moral and theological truisms finally leads to the overriding reality of all Job’s painful struggles—God resides in the majestic fullness of all that has been created and all that will ever be created. At the same time, he is the God of all life in all circumstances. Humans inevitably desire to enfold God’s reality into their all-too-finite capacity—moral, spiritual, or intellectual. Just as inevitably, they fail, often with crushing consequences. Though we presume to think like God, nonetheless, we cannot. Our conclusions are always myopic, often childish, yet we react with indignation that we are unable to mold all that is into all that we are not. Job is our great spiritual mentor—embodying all our great yearnings to follow God, while being all-too-inclined to gauge our unique histories by human measures that are so sadly inadequate to the task. We undoubtedly have friends and family members who are inclined to point out that we are not in a position to judge who we are before God. We, for our part, may be fully inclined to argue the righteousness of our cause with great fervor. Our lives may well map to Job’s—we feel unfairly treated by life’s happenstance, and want a ‘reason’ why God has not resolved, or does not resolve, matters to our liking. This practice is not likely to end to our satisfaction.

The deeper and more painful the situation, the more we may dig in our spiritual ‘feet,’ sure that we deserve God’s agreement with our judgment. This can ultimately lead to bitterness, alienation, and a life of spiritual isolation. However, if we, like Job, labor to hold fast to our first and deepest desire, to follow God with all our hearts, we ultimately arrive at the soul of all we can comprehend—our faith can only be measured and nurtured by our experiences of love, given and received. There are no intellectual or dogmatic assertions that can illuminate the intimacy of God within. There are no rationales that can blindly clarify or diminish the pains of being human in a human world. Job grew ‘rich’ through a life of love, and despite the anguish of tragedy, he recovered his experience of God’s blessing through the same radiant love that had bound him to divine abundance through all his years. He is a model for all

who choose life in God's embrace, without demanding calculation or proof. The psalmist proclaims the ultimate fulfillment of faith-- **I believe that I shall see the bounty of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait for the Lord with courage; be stouthearted, and wait for the Lord (27:13-14).** May we, each and all, follow the path of Job, searching to embrace the love that embraces us, in order to discover the true abundance within our lives.



Job Reproved by His Friends by Gustave Doré
Via Wikimedia Commons

For Pondering

- How would you help a friend who felt utterly abandoned by God to rediscover a connection to spiritual abundance?
 - How do you connect to God's presence in your life on a daily basis?
 - Have you discovered a deep reservoir of living faith that provides spiritual balance in time of loss or suffering?
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