

April 15, 2025

Daily Reflections

Journeying through Lent



Center for Spiritual Development

BRAVADO AND DENIAL

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An Excerpt from Today's Gospel

Simon Peter said to him, "Master, where are you going?"

Jesus answered him,

*"Where I am going, you cannot follow me now,
though you will follow later."*

Peter said to him,

*"Master, why can I not follow you now?
I will lay down my life for you."*

Jesus answered, "Will you lay down your life for me?"

*Amen, amen, I say to you, the cock will not crow
before you deny me three times."*

JOHN 13:36-38

Reflection

The Sacred Scripture for this Tuesday of Holy Week recounts the Last Supper and is generally focused on the prediction that the apostles will abandon Jesus in the hour of his greatest need for them. Today I focus on St. Peter's bravado that soon plays out into total denial out of fear of reprisal.

Simon bar Jonah, a man very much like us, was filled with contradictions, which drew him away from the yearnings for fullness of life. He vacillated from shy curiosity to wholehearted enthusiasm and love for Jesus. Then again, generosity and self-gift were slowly eroded because of pride, doubt, fear, and need for self-preservation. His sojourn through life was marked by his search for his identity and the desires of his heart. At once being Simon, the rugged fisherman of impetuous nature, and Peter, the fisher of men, a man with a mission and rock of the Church, he was invited into the struggle.

For our reflection today, we witness great love and his brave intention to stand by Jesus no matter the cost. Yet, I can see Jesus shaking his head at the felt sense that the intended bravado would come to a terrible end, denial that he did not even know the man. Terrible disillusionment and failure follow.

The Passover supper Jesus shared with his friends must have been a profound experience of community, deep connection with Jesus, even a sense of pride in following Jesus. And now Peter cannot go where Jesus is going.

Disappointment in his inability would be shattering. So instead, Peter redoubles his statement of intent. Yet, we know the story. Fear and doubt are powerful weapons when confronted with evil, even with the best of intentions.

Peter and the apostles are not that different than you and me. I know that my best of intentions and desire to be for and stand with another are fraught with personal weakness, anxiety, ambivalence, and fear. At times I disappoint another when they need me most. I don't want to interfere. Or I fear I may just be in the way. I lack moral courage to take a stand. Too often, I fly under the radar of another's need out of my own inner weakness.

This is a long way from denying Jesus ... or is it? Today moral courage and a willingness to stand up for what is right by gospel standards -- living as Jesus lived -- are very costly. Loving as God loves is not easy. The challenge Peter encountered is my own. How will I respond in the face of evil, indignity, and cruelty?



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For Pondering

- How am I different than or like Simon Peter?
 - When have I let down someone I love? What were my reasons?
 - How do I want to respond in the face of evil, indignity, and cruelty?
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For Prayer

*Gentle me, Holy One,
Into an unclenched moment, a deep breath,
a letting go of heavy expectancies,
of shriveling anxieties, of dead certainties
that, softened by the silence,
surrounded by the light, and open to the mystery,
I may be found by wholeness, upheld by the unfathomable,
entranced by the simple and filled with the joy that is you.*

FROM GUERILLAS OF GRACE BY TED LODER, 1984

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