

2019 Lenten Journey **J Dolezal**

Wednesday, March 6th

And so, it begins. My Lenten Journey of meditation, reflection, prayer, and hope of spiritual growth. Lord, please travel with me, lead me, and encourage me along the way. I am open and desire to grow closer to you.

I have chosen to utilize Richard John Neuhaus' book, "Death on a Friday Afternoon", as a tool to fuel reflection and bring clarity and focus for the Paschal Mystery (passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ).

My journey is an "exploration" and the "markers" are the "Seven Last Words" of Jesus from the cross.

Seven Last Words

- "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."*
- "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise."*
- "Woman, behold your son. Son, behold your mother."*
- "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"*
- "I thirst."*
- "It is finished."*
- "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit."*

Chapter 1 Coming to Our Senses

The First Word from the cross: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Lord, may I "come to my senses" realizing I was at the cross, standing by as they drove the nails through your hands and feet into the wood. I am a sinner, guilty of putting you to death because I feared for my own life and because of failure to know you were truly our savior.

I have come to my senses today, returned home (as the Prodigal son returned) sorry for turning my back on you and asking for forgiveness.

*I sense that in your life and your death is my life and my death. I fear you with hope for the grace of your wisdom and with awareness that knowing my true self comes from first knowing you. I hear the “call” to follow you. And, today, I take a few steps with your lead.
Axis Mundi – the connection between heaven and earth*

I “come to my senses” as I sense myself in the life, and death, of Christ. The image below helps me as I meditate and strive for consciousness in knowing You.



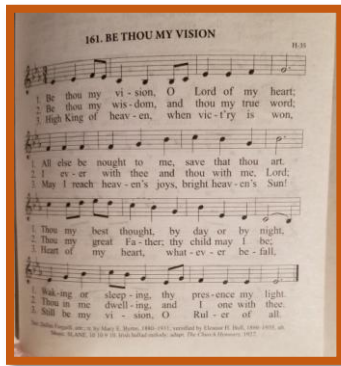
Father, I am back...I have all my “baggage” of sins. I am sorry and pray for Your forgiveness. I was there when they crucified You on the cross. I am sorry.

*I confess to almighty God
and to you, my brothers and sisters,
that I have greatly sinned,
in my thoughts and in my words,
in what I have done and in what I have failed to do,
through my fault, through my fault,
through my most grievous fault;
therefore I ask blessed Mary ever-Virgin,
all the Angels and Saints,
and you, my brothers and sisters,
to pray for me to the Lord our God.*

I seek atonement (“at-one-ment”) knowing there must be reconciliation. I also know I don’t have the power to “set things right” for my sins.

Thursday, March 7, 2019

I begin Day 2 of Lent by humming the hymn, “Be Thou My Vision”. This is my favorite hymn and prayer for this new morning.



I don't have the power to “set things right” for my sins. The good news is that “The ONE” can set things right.

According to Neuhaus, “The opening words of the Gospel of John: ‘In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God, all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.’ The One who is life itself does this because nobody else could do it. He who is light and life plunges headlong into darkness and death and does so in perfect freedom. It is his mission, the reason he came into the world. ‘No one takes my life from me, but I lay it down of my own accord.’ He said, ‘I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again, this charge I have received from my Father.’”

“In perfect freedom, the Son become the goat become the Lamb of God is condemned by the lie in order to bear witness to the truth. The truth is that we (I) are incapable of setting things right. The truth is that the more we try to set things right, the more we compound our guilt. It is not enough for God to take our part. God must take our place...God must die.”

“For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” “God must become what we are (sinners) in order that we might become what God is. To effectively take our part, he must take our place.”

*God, I know more about you and to your glory I proclaim thanksgiving. I, a sinner, am powerless for “setting things right”. I turn myself over to you and know that you have “set things right for me”.
AMEN!*

Friday, March 8, 2019



Day 3

This morning I focus on “atonement”...”at-one-ment”.

Psalm 51 seems to be helpful for my focus.

Psalm 51 3-13

Have mercy on me, God, in accord with your merciful love;

In abundant compassion blot out my transgressions.

Thoroughly wash away my guilt and from my sin cleanse me.

For I know my transgressions; My sin is always before me.

Against you, you alone have I sinned;

I have done what is evil in your eyes.

So that you are just in your word, and without reproach in your judgment.

Behold, I was born in guilt, in sin my mother conceived me.

Behold, you desire true sincerity;

And secretly you teach me wisdom.

Cleanse me with hyssop, that I may be pure;

Wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.

*You will let me hear gladness and joy;
The bones you have crushed will rejoice.
Turn away your face from my sins;
Blot out all my iniquities.
Clean heart create for me, God;
Renew within me a steadfast spirit.
Do not drive me from before your face, nor take from me your holy spirit.*

AMEN!

Neuhaus offers, "At-one-ment" (atonement). What was separated by an abyss of wrong has been reconciled by the deed of perfect love. What the first Adam destroyed the second Adam has restored. 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.' We knew not what we did when we reached for the right to name good and evil. We knew not what we did when we grabbed what we could and went off to a distant country...

Today, here at the cross, our eyes are fixed on the dying derelict who is the Lord of life. We look at the One who is everything that we are and everything we are not, the One who is true man and true God. In him we, God and man, are perfectly one.

At-one-ment. Here, at the cross, we have come home, home to the truth about ourselves, home to the truth about what God has done about what we have done. And now we know, or begin to know, why this awful, awe-filled Friday is called good."

*Lord, by your grace, I have "come to my senses". I was there when Jesus was crucified...my sins help "nail Him to the cross" daily. I am aware that my sins hold me back from knowing You and that "at-one-ment" beyond my abilities. Jesus is the way...in Him I have access to salvation to be "at one" with You. Forgive me my sins Lord and continue leading me further along this Lenten journey.
Amen!*

Saturday, March 9, 2019

Day 4

Chapter 2 Judge Not

The Second Word from the cross: “Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise.”

Lord, lead me further along the journey today. I have come to my senses and know You are my savior and the only one who can help me “make things right” for my sins.

I was there when they put you on the cross and there as the two thieves were there (hung on crosses next to you). I hear your words (The Second Word from the cross) and I believe them as TRUTH. Today, on my Lenten Journey, I take more steps toward knowing you.

Amen!



“The first one home is a thief. Jesus is not very fastidious (not “very attentive to and concerned about accuracy and detail”) about the company he keeps. A serious question is raised about whether we will be happy with those who are with us in paradise – assuming for the moment, that we will be there.”

“The one thief joined in the mockery with cutting scorn born of his own desperate plight. ‘Are you not Christ? Save yourself and us!’”

“The other thief rebuked the first, we are told. ‘Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward for our deeds,

but this man has done nothing wrong.”...”Jesus, he said, ‘remember me when you come into your kingdom.’ And Jesus said to him, “Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise.”

Lord, as the “good” thief (Dysmus) turned toward the light, may I “come to my senses” before it is too late.

I stop here on the journey to ponder and pray on the “longing” and source of “hunger” of “desperation” to drive my ambition for growing in faith. Communion with the Absolute is the vision for the day. Communion with the perfectly One in whom all the fragments of my existence come together and last forever. I pray for the “want” to seek and follow Jesus. Amen!

*Jesus, I look at You with the small (mustard seed) faith I have. I look at You knowing that as I keep looking my faith will grow. And I look to You for salvation because it is TRUTH and because I know You are the only path to eternal life.
Amen!*

Sunday, March 10, 2019

Day 5

Chapter 2 (continued) Judge Not



“The Last Judgment” – Italian: Il Giudizio Universale

Today, my steps further along the Lenten journey, I strive to move closer to God. This will be another challenge but, I move knowing Jesus is leading me.

“God’s ways are infinitely more than we can understand, but they are not contrary to what he asks us to believe.” So, moving closer to Him will require faith (not sight or other human senses). Chapter 2 is about “Judge Not”. As I try to move closer to God today I think of the call to refrain from judging...judging myself or judging others. I am a sinner and guilty of judging daily. I am sorry for judging myself and for judging others. God is the Judge and He alone capable of issuing judgment that will come in time.

In judging I “play the role of the Pharisee in the temple”. God, help me come to my senses and realize that I am not a Pharisee and it is wrong for me to judge. I know your kindness is meant to lead me to repentance. Today I follow you toward repentance as I strive to refrain from judging myself or others.

Amen!

Monday, March 11, 2019

Day 6

Chapter 3 A Strange Glory



The Third Word from the cross:

When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing near, he said to his mother, “Woman, behold your son! Then he said to the disciple, “Behold you mother! And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.

“In John’s Gospel, the way of the cross is the way of glory. It is a strange glory.”



Photo from Crosswalk

This morning I reflect on Mary, mother of Jesus and mother of all Christians.

“From her Jesus received his humanity, his Jewish humanity; the color of his eyes, the cut of his nose. She potty-trained hi; taught him his first words, encouraged his first steps, kissed his scuffed knee and made it all better, even as she pondered prophesies about piercing swords and wondered at the

meaning of a king from the East who presented as his royal gift myrrh for the birth of her lovely child.”

Here at the cross, Mary “learned the hard love of letting go, the love that is forged in surrender to a love greater than our own, the love that grows beyond all possessing.”

As I take these steps to progress along my journey of faith this Lent, I pray that I can learn from Mary about the “love” Jesus, the WORD, commands of me.

Tuesday, March 12, 2019

Day 7

Continuation on “A Strange Glory”



I was there when they put Jesus on the Cross. I felt “guilty” and helpless as I simply “stood by” while Jesus suffered. Oh, but if my pain was the nature of Mary’s pain must have been. Mary was there witnessing the event as the mother of Jesus. She too was “helpless” “at the cross her station keeping”.

Today, I strive to take steps for knowing more about Mary, about the pain she suffered watching her son be put to death, and about her “gift” to Jesus (helpless as He was) by being “present”.

Lord, help me keep my eyes open for those who suffer. Help me “be there” for them though I may be unable to “help”. The gift of presence is a gift of love and I am called to serve with love. May I suffer (as Mary suffered) as I experience helplessness...suffer overcome by the gift of presence and love for those who are helpless.

Amen.

Wednesday, March 13, 2019

Day 8

There is greater news than Jonah!

Jonah spent was “saved” after spending 3 days in the mouth of a whale.

Jesus saved us all with His resurrection after 3 days in the tomb. Thanks be to God!



My Lenten journey continues this morning knowing of the “great news”...Jesus’ resurrection!

I, with the lead of Jesus, take more steps today as I read, reflect, and pray with Neuhaus’ “Death on a Friday Afternoon” ...A Strange Glory chapter.

“Mary did not lose her son at the cross, she gains sons and daughters beyond number.”

“Of strangest strangeness is the glory. It is the wild glory of abandonment. ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? She was watching him and he was watching her and they both knew the words of the psalm: ‘thou art he who took me from the womb, thou didst keep me safe upon my mother’s breasts. Upon thee was I cast from my birth, and since my mother bore me thou hast been my God. Be not far from me, for trouble is near and there is none to help.’”

Lord, I am here to help. I helped hang you on the cross, standing by feeling helpless to help you. Today, I am here...I can help and will help. The resurrection gives me hope and renewal for overcoming my sins. You are the savior and today I am saved.

I am one of Mary’s sons and look to her as the model for faith, for accepting Your call and for loving others.

Amen!

Thursday, March 14, 2019

Day 9

Chapter 4 (of "Death on a Friday Afternoon")

Derelection

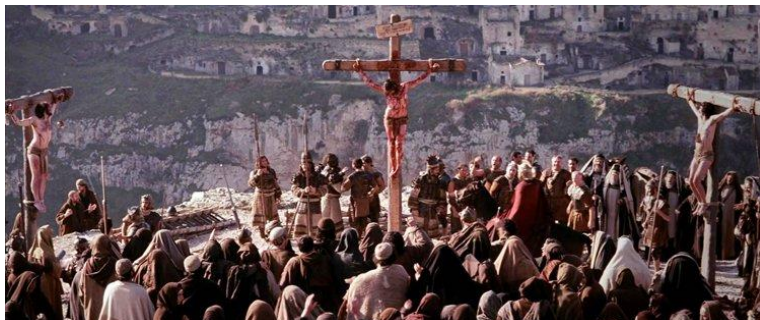
The Fourth Word from the cross: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

"Here is the cry of the abandoned one."

"All the while they mocked him, 'You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself by coming down from the cross!'"

"With slight variation, all four Gospels report a threefold mockery. In this story things happen in threes. In Gethsemane Jesus prays three times and three times comes back to find the disciples sleeping. Peter denies him three times. The three mockeries at the end of Jesus' life match the three temptations by Satan at the beginning of his ministry. And so echo at the cross, 'if you are the Son of God...'"

"It is called the passion narrative and we are reminded that the word 'passion' is from the Latin meaning 'to suffer'. It is a time when 'passion' is associated with heaving breathing romance and the selling of perfumes, we are caught up short by the reminder that to love is to suffer and the suffering is not always sweet."



As I reflect on the passion of Christ I recall one of my favorite (and most humbling) hymns, "Were You There When They Crucified My Lord".

- 1. Were you there when they crucified my Lord?
Were you there when they crucified my Lord?
Oh! Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.
Were you there when they crucified my Lord?*

- 2. Were you there when they nailed him to the tree?
Were you there when they nailed him to the tree?
Oh! Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.
Were you there when they nailed him to the tree?*

- 3. Were you there when they pierced him in the side?
Were you there when they pierced him in the side?
Oh! Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.
Were you there when they pierced him in the side?*

- 4. Were you there when the sun refused to shine?
Were you there when the sun refused to shine?
Oh! Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.
Were you there when the sun refused to shine?*

- 5. Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?
Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?
Oh! Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.
Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?*

- 6. Were you there when he rose up from the dead?
Were you there when he rose up from the dead?
6. Sometimes I feel like shouting 'Glory, glory, glory!'
Were you there when he rose up from the dead?*

I was there when they crucified our Lord.

I was there when Jesus asked, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me".

To love is to suffer and today I suffer with Christ in glory to God.

Amen!

Friday, March 15, 2019

Day 10

“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Continued)



*“Did Jesus, at the moment he cried out, really think God had abandoned him”?
“If we answer yes to that question, we would seem to be denying his divinity.”*

“The important thing, the devastating thing, is that there is no answer from the One to whom he calls out in the darkness.”

Why does Neuhaus suggest, “the important thing, the devastating thing, is that there is no answer from the One to whom he calls out...”?

I decided to discuss this matter with my wife to see what her “take” was. She and I agreed that our answer for the question of why Jesus “cried out”, is that it was human...Jesus on the cross was human and as we other humans cry out when in a desperate (dire) situation, it makes “sense” (human capability) that he might cry out. As for why the One to whom he calls out not “replying”, our take is that there was no need and that the One (God) replied by allowing His will to be carried out (Jesus suffering the sins of all and dying on the cross.

It makes sense to me that the resurrection of Christ would not have happened without first, his death, and all that transpired on this dark day was God’s will to be carried out.

Saturday, March 16, 2019

Day 11

“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Continued)

As I continue to ponder on Christ’s words (a question), I continue reading in Neuhaus’ book (Death on a Friday Afternoon) and find, “Go is present in his apparent absence. God’s absence is embodied in the body of Israel and in the extension of that body, the New Israel, which is the Church. God is present in the forsaken so that nobody – nobody ever, nobody anywhere at any time under any circumstance – is forsaken.”

So, in my mind, (“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”) the question as to why God didn’t “reply” has been answered. God’s will fulfilled with the death and resurrection of Christ is all the answer we might need.



Monday, March 18, 2019

Day 13

Today I have decided to take more steps along my Lenten Journey reflecting and praying on today’s Gospel reading (Luke 6:36-38). The Gospel is about “Judging”...Judging others and judging oneself.

Luke 6:36-38

³⁶Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful. ³⁷Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven; ³⁸give, and it will be given to you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For the measure you give will be the measure you get back.”

While I strive to refrain from judging, it is a challenge. Perhaps, it relates to the fact I am human. Never-the-less, we are called to refrain from judging and a challenge it is. Lord, strengthen my ability to sustain an open mind, a mind appreciative of the diversity of your creation.

I also struggle with judging myself...I feel I am hard on myself at times...unable to measure up to my own expectations or the expectations I believe God may have for me. This is especially true as related to faith. For as far as I feel I have come in believing, there are times I have doubt or when my self-will wants to prevail over God's will.

Lord, give me the patience and strengthen my appreciation for the diversity of your creation. Continue "nudging" me along the journey toward knowing You.

Amen!

Tuesday, March 19, 2019

Day 14

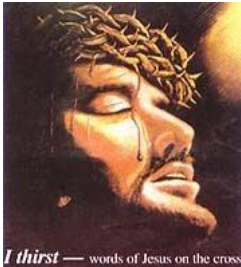
Chapter 5

The Fifth Word from the cross: "I thirst"

According to Neuhaus, "Reflections on the Fifth word from the cross traditionally refer to the Church's missionary impulse, an impulse driven by Jesus thirsting for souls."

"Perhaps "I thirst" is the fulfillment of this from Psalm 22:

*I am poured out like water,
and all my bones are out of joint,
my heart is like wax,
it is melted within my breast,
my strength is dried up like a potsherd,
and my tongue cleaves to my jaws,
thou dost lay me in the dust of death.*



I thirst — words of Jesus on the cross

Friar Tuck's Fleeting Thoughts

“The sponge with the vinegary wine is put on hyssop and offered to Jesus.”

“Hyssop is a bushy plant quite unsuited to bearing the weight of a sponge soaked with wine. Embarrassed by that, some translations have seized upon an eleventh-century manuscript that suggests the sponge was actually put on the end of a javelin or long pole.

“In Exodus 12, hyssop is used to sprinkle the blood of the paschal lamb on the doorsteps of the Israelites so that the angel of death will pass over their homes. In the New Testament, Hebrews 9 picks up on this to show how the blood of Jesus seals a new covenant, just as Moses used hyssop to sprinkle the blood of animals in order to seal the earlier covenant.”

“The connection is between hyssop and the blood of the lambs.”

*Lord, I thirst...I thirst to know You through Jesus. Jesus' blood seals your covenant and through the sacrament of the Eucharist I gain avenue to quench my thirst.
Amen!*

Wednesday, March 20, 2019

Continuing on “I thirst”

“So it is that the words “I thirst” prompt the offering of the cup – in the form of a sponge on the hyssop of the covenant – that Jesus drinks to the bitter end. Here is intimated the new covenant in his blood, the chalice of wine that becomes his Eucharistic blood. It is like and unlike the sprinkled blood of the Passover lambs. Were it not his own blood, were it not the blood of ‘the lamb slain from the foundation of the world’, then the letter to the Hebrews tells us, ‘he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But this is not the blood of just any lamb, it is the blood of the Lamb of God and therefore this suffering is definitive, it is enough for now and forever.”



Monday, March 25, 2019

Day 20

Continuing my Lenten journey as I read, reflect, and pray using Richard John Neuhaus' "Death on a Friday Afternoon"...Chapter 5 Witnesses...The Fifth Word on the cross..."I Thirst".

"Because of Easter, the words from the cross are words of life. The cross is not merely the bad news before the good news of the resurrection. Come Easter Sunday, we do not put the suffering and death behind us as though it were no more the nightmarish prelude to the joy of victory. No, the cross remains the path of discipleship for those who follow the risen Lord."

"Come follow me, says Jesus. Take up your cross and follow me. In the world you will have trouble but fear not, I have overcome the world."

Neuhaus' words above challenge me. For some reason (being human, I presume) I have a tendency to expect each day to be free of worry or of the need to "carry a cross". Neuhaus goes on to add, "The way of the Christian life is cruciform. Jesus did not suffer and die in order that we need not suffer and die, but in order that our suffering and death might be joined to his redemptive victory. The Christian way is not one of avoidance but of participation in the suffering of Christ."

So, my tendency to expect freedom of worry, freedom of suffering, and freedom from having to bear my cross is "un-real". For me to keep this expectation is waste and worthless. Lord, please keep me reminded that my sufferings are to participate in your suffering and that my death connected to your death. This is the way of discipleship and the way I want to travel. I need you with me and I need you to be my Sheppard. AMEN!