

Third Sunday of Lent, 2020

Intro:

We are united on this 3rd Sunday of Lent, through Highland Radio and the webcam. We are united in this way in one instance because of a signal that travels through a satellite away up in space. That's the technology of it. The deeper part is the theology of it; you are united in this moment with the Risen Lord Jesus, in the place where you are and so am I, here in the Cathedral. That means that we are one body, gathered together at the table of God's Word which we will hear shortly and at the table of the Eucharist which we will soon celebrate; one body in Christ.

Homily:

"Will you trust me?"

If there is one single unifying theme that captures the essence of the whole of the Scriptures from the Creation of the world to the book of Revelation, it is God saying to his people, to us; 'Will you trust me?' Again and again God made covenants with his people; 'I will be you God and you will be my people, and that means I will be faithful to you and you will be faithful to me.'

Saying 'we will be your people' doesn't primarily mean 'we will do what you tell us'. It does mean that we will do what God tells us but the reason we will do what he tells us is that we trust him. Do we trust that God, the good God, is the sovereign ruler of all things and that no matter what happens he loves us and will look after us?

Trust is not easy

For us human beings trust is not easy. People who have been badly wounded in their lives know that the biggest casualty is their ability to trust, to trust people and to trust God. In every human heart there is a wound; it came with Original Sin and it makes it difficult to trust.

God wants to call us back to trust and the bible is a series of his patient efforts.

The one I want to reflect on this morning is the one with Moses. The people of Israel had terrible difficulty trusting God. We got just a little bit of that in the First Reading. Remember the story; the people of Israel are in slavery being used and abused by the Egyptians.

God raised up Moses to lead the people out of Egypt and in spite of all the arrogance and bullshiness of Pharaoh God forced him saying; 'let my people go!' And Pharaoh relented and let the people go. And off they went, released from their hardship and their slavery. Then they came to the Red Sea and they could not cross. They looked back and they saw Pharaoh and his army bearing down on them. And they panicked and they shouted out to the Lord; 'Were there no graves in Egypt that you had to bring us out here in the wilderness to die at Pharaoh's hands?' And how did the Lord repay their lack of trust? He got Moses to stretch

out his hand over the sea and it parted and the people of Israel walked through it on dry ground. And they sang; *'Who is like you O Lord? Sing to the Lord, glorious his triumph!'*

And they marched on out into the desert. After a while there was nothing to eat and they murmured against Moses; 'It would have been better if we had died in Egypt when we sat by the fleshpots and had plenty of bread to eat instead of being dragged out here to die in the wilderness!' And God repaid their lack of trust by giving them Manna from heaven. And they ate it and their hunger was satisfied.

On they went and in time they came to Rephidim where there was no water. This is what we heard about in the first reading:

"Tormented by thirst, the people complained against Moses. 'Why did you bring us out of Egypt?' they said. 'Was it so that I should die of thirst, my children too, and my cattle?' Moses appealed to the Lord. 'How am I to deal with this people?' he said. 'A little more and they will stone me!'"

God told Moses to go to the rock at Horeb and strike it with his staff and there would be water. And he did and there was water.

Not a demand for miracles but an invitation

The point of these bible stories is not that we demand miracles seeing God as a magician. They are an invitation to keep our Covenant and trust in God's loving care in good times and bad. The stories are not about somebody else long ago. They are about you and me here and now.

What keeps me from trusting God; it might be something in my past. Sometimes when we have been badly hurt by life we will find it hard to trust that life is reliable, that there is somebody looking after us.

It might be something in the future; you might be listening to me this morning and worrying about what the next weeks will bring with all the talk about the virus;
Will my health be compromised or the health of somebody I love?
Will the financial hit that may well come hit my business or my place of work?
The biggest wound for you may be that you can't be physically present at Mass this morning and receive Holy Communion.
You may be full of dread about something else entirely.

Wherever we are this morning the offer is the same as it has always been. 'I will be your God and you will be my people'.

It's been the offer that he has made throughout history. He made it more powerfully that ever in Jesus, who came right into our very skin to walk the human journey with us. His life, death and resurrection says I will be with you no matter what. Trust me.

I want to close by quoting two women saints. Julian of Norwich said:
"All will be well and all will be well. All manner of thing will be well."

And St Teresa of Avila said says this to you this morning:

" Today may there be peace within. Trust God that you are exactly where you are meant to be. May you not forget the infinite possibilities that are born of faith. Use those gifts that you have received, and pass on the love that has been given to you. Be content knowing you are a child of God. Let this presence settle into your bones, and allow your soul the freedom to sing, dance, praise and love. It is there for each and every one of us."