

Commentary on the Gospel for Thu, Mar 14th 2024

Re-read the Scriptures to deepen our faith

Today we are ten days away from the beginning of Holy Week. It is a good time to renew the commitments we have taken up on Ash Wednesday. We began with prayers and fasting. Because it is the Lenten season, we are probably a bit more spiritual than at some other times of the year; we are probably a bit more patient and humble. This is good – and worth DOING more consistently.

John, the evangelist, uses a literary style in his Gospel to make it look like a trial that Jesus conducts, where the religious leaders are exposed. The Gospel presents a kind of courtroom investigation where Jesus would conduct his own defence. In Jewish law, the truth was to be ascertained by the testimony of two or more witnesses. From conducting his own defence, Jesus would assume the role of prosecutor, with the Jews becoming the defendants.

Jesus brings in four witnesses in his defence: God the Father, John the Baptist, his own life and signs he performed, and the Hebrew Scriptures – The Thora and the Prophets.

But no matter what the arguments of Jesus were, the Jews would not accept him. Decades later, while writing the Gospel, John presents those four witnesses of Jesus in an attempt to encourage the members of the early Church. The Church was facing severe persecution, and John brought up these witnesses to tell the disciples why they should continue to believe in Jesus.

The profound experience of the risen Jesus gave the Christians of the early Church the strength to face persecution courageously. Now John wants his community to meditate on this living presence of Jesus amidst them. John wants them to meditate on the life, teachings and signs of Jesus and also to re-read their Scriptures in the light of Jesus' life, death and resurrection.

As we draw closer to the Holy Week and Easter, the Church invites us to meditate on why many people continue to close their minds and hearts to Jesus. The Jewish leadership of Jesus' time refused to accept him because of their faulty understanding of the scripture and traditions. They feared accepting Jesus would jeopardise their social status and authority. Today, the Church invites us to re-read the scriptures in light of various happenings in the world, where Christ is still rejected by many and wars and violence threaten the life of our universe.

What are the concerns that trouble us as Christians and that threaten our life in faith?

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