

Commentary on the Gospel for Thu, Mar 21st 2013

Today's readings remind us of God's covenant with Abraham, and with all of us. We are called to keep his covenant throughout the ages. In return, he will be our God and the God of our descendants. The Psalm reminds us that we should "look to the Lord in his strength; seek to serve him constantly." Lent is a good time to reflect on his covenant and on our place in the world and in the Church. This year, with the resignation of Pope Benedict, we have a new opportunity to reflect on what it means to follow God's word and what it means to be without papal leadership during this unique time.

I happen to be the director of a doctoral program in leadership at Creighton University. As I reflect on these days without a leader in the Roman Catholic Church, I keep reminding myself that we are all leaders in our own right. We all are guides and facilitators of our followers. As Chris Lowney writes in his excellent book *Heroic Leadership*, "Leadership is not a job, not a role one plays at work and then puts aside during the commute home in order to relax and enjoy real life. Rather, leadership is the leader's real life", we are all leaders in the church, in our family, in our jobs, in all we do.

In today's Gospel passage the Jews did not believe Jesus. Imagine being told that who professes that "whoever keeps my word will never see death" when this is completely outside your experience. John's words remind me that as much as we are leaders to many, we should not forget that we are followers of God. However, being a follower is difficult. We have to trust that the leader means well, and has our best interest in mind. We have to trust that the leader speaks the truth.

During this season of Lent I pray for the cardinals in Rome, that they may find the right leader for the Church, a leader who will bring all people together for peace and justice. I pray that I will be open and have the courage to follow the leaders around me, and that when acting in the role of a leader, I will always act for the greater good and my leadership style will inspire others to become better leaders.

[This reflection was written before the election of Pope Francis last week.]

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