



Daily Reflections

JOURNEYING THROUGH CHALLENGING TIMES

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UNENDING GROWTH IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

By Fr. David C. Robinson, S.J.

An Excerpt From Today's Reading

The LORD used to speak to Moses face to face, as one man speaks to another. Moses would then return to the camp, but his young assistant, Joshua, son of Nun, would not move out of the tent. Moses stood there with the LORD and proclaimed his name, "LORD." Thus the LORD passed before him and cried out, "The LORD, the LORD, a merciful and gracious God, slow to anger and rich in kindness and fidelity, continuing his kindness for a thousand generations, and forgiving wickedness and crime and sin; yet not declaring the guilty guiltless...." Then Moses said, "If I find favor with you, O LORD, do come along in our company. This is indeed a stiff-necked people; yet pardon our wickedness and sins, and receive us as your own." So Moses stayed there with the LORD for forty days and forty nights, without eating any food or drinking any water, and he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the ten commandments

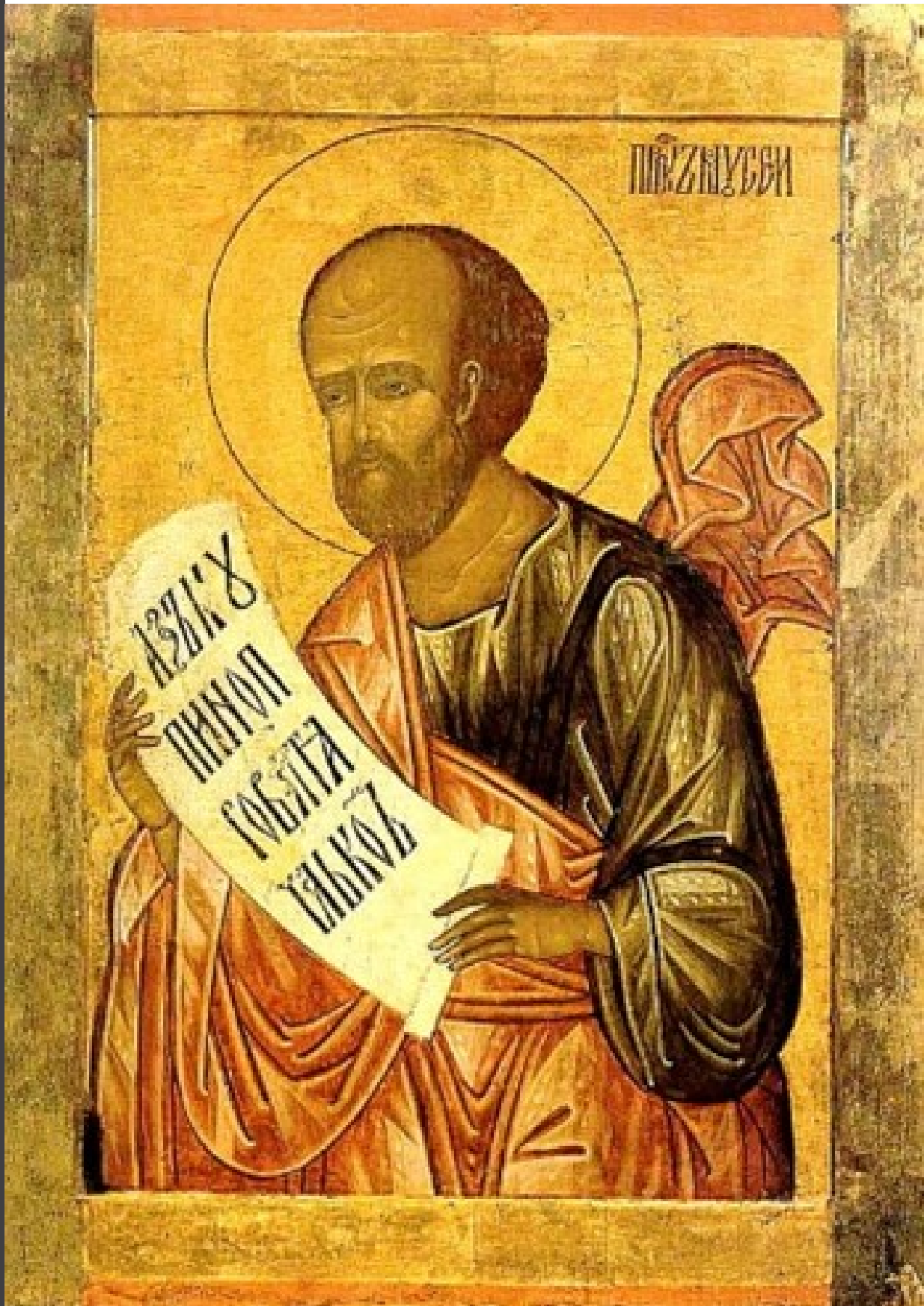
Reflection

In our liturgical walk with Scripture in these summer months, we are brought into the extremely complex dialog between Moses and God, as he attempts to bring clarity to the ways of the divine with a people all too often divided and disobedient. Moses knows deeply God's loving intentions for the people, but is also wise and discerning in his attempts to shape a process of common life and worship that gives focus to following a path of mercy and justice. This involves a covenant of both mystery and structure. Through the generations, the people come to understand that the *panim* (face) of God Moses meets in the tent is part of the reality of divine Presence (*shekhinah*—dwelling) where God is concretely manifest in history (the burning bush, the pillar of fire, etc.). The God of history is also the God *in* history. This is an intimate relationship, quite distinct from the religious traditions surrounding the chosen people. What others see as simply the manifest power of a deity injected into daily life, the Hebrews come to recognize as the Glory (*kavod*) of God, a profoundly personal connection merging social, cultural, moral, and religious dimensions of the life of faith. Devotion and reverence are not theological constructs, but the fruit of a spiritual union embracing all of life. From within this place of communion, the Hebrews develop an extraordinary sensitivity to Holiness (*quodesh*—what is set apart for God). Such a spiritual vision can embrace times, places, objects, and people. Suddenly, the world is “charged with the grandeur of God” as Gerard Manley Hopkins so poignantly notes. The holiness infused in the world is not some pantheistic enterprise. It is the fruit of the union of divine intention with human transparency to the reality of “God in all things.”

The selection from Exodus is a riveting and revealing example of the manner in which God's way of being with us and the world helps us to form and incarnate a divine possibility that our merely human capacities cannot reach. God's presence and glory provide both inspiration and direction to our human longing to *be* more, rather than simply to know or have more. Through the gift of the Commandments, Moses begins a centuries-long exploration of the form and process of living a life deeply connected to the loving creativity of God through time, while inviting each and all to engage in a commitment of structure and practice that can promote peace, compassion, and community.

Our personal, familial, and social contexts can benefit from a profound consciousness of the gift bequeathed to us by Moses—mercy with justice, compassion with structure, and personal faith with social cohesiveness. These help us to be more than the enclaves of self-satisfaction, or the fulfillment of imposed moral, legal, and religious mandates, that can capture our imaginations. God's Presence is our freedom to discover and embrace what

Moses uncovered in the tent—all that we can conceive or create only comes to true fruition when our selves unite with the divine Self, who ‘charges the world with the grandeur of God.’



Icon of Moses and the 10 Commandments

For Pondering

- How have you experienced the invitation of God to ‘enter the tent,’ and to discover something about yourself and your world that you never expected?
 - Are there aspects of your own self-understanding that you hope to surrender to God’s transforming love in your life/family/community?
 - What moments in your life have left you with a sense of how your world is ‘charged with the grandeur of God?’
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