



Daily Reflections

JOURNEYING THROUGH CHALLENGING TIMES

Image by Christine Sponchia from Pixabay

THE RADIANCE OF MERCY AND JUSTICE

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

An Excerpt from Today's Reading

As Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tablets of the commandments in his hands, he did not know that the skin of his face had become radiant while he conversed with the LORD. When Aaron, then, and the other children of Israel saw Moses and noticed how radiant the skin of his face had become, they were afraid to come near him. Only after Moses called to them did Aaron and all the rulers of the community come back to him. Moses then spoke to them. Later on, all the children of Israel came up to him, and he enjoined on them all that the LORD had told him on Mount Sinai.

EXODUS 34:29-32

Reflection

As the covenant dialog between God and Moses continues in Exodus, we are

made painfully aware of the fragility of the relationship with the Hebrews. While he constantly reaffirms a depth of care for, and trust in, his chosen messenger, God appears dubious of the people's ability to remain faithful on their spiritual odyssey. An ominous threat of destruction in their future does not bode well for the emerging covenant! Nonetheless, the conversation continues as the two explore the ways in which the religious life of the community can be codified and grounded. Ceremonies and celebrations are established to commemorate the history of God's walk with them: the Festival of Unleavened Bread in remembrance of their exodus from Egypt; the day of sabbath to remind them of God's act of creation and the following rest, and so forth. Coupled with the Tablets of the Commandments, God instructs Moses in the ways of creating a people whose community follows the path of divine Glory and Holiness in a life of faith, while building a covenant based on the Ten Commandments and the code of the Law that would help them to shape an identity filled with a heart of justice and right order with one another. The power of the unfolding revelation is seen by all the Hebrews in the radiance of Moses' face. Even in the midst of future uncertainties, the promise continues.

As present-day readers of this confusing narrative, we may feel lost in the weaving together of the grandeur of God's loving design throughout history and the precise structure of communal commandments. However, embedded within this mystery is the foundation of the Christian traditions as well. The coming of Jesus continues the great story of the love that saves us, and the incarnation gives it a rich depth of intimacy and personal connection. The original inspirations of the disciples and first communities are embodied within the evolving practices of contemplation, liturgy, and sacramental life. From the developing scriptural witness, communities generate rules for moral life and order, and the structures of doctrine. Although the philosophies and cultural modes behind them might differ, the ever-deeper search of the faithful for the riches of God's mystery and vision is in keeping with the founding genius of the Jewish traditions. These traditions teach us a profound wisdom about the heritage of our current religious journey—our walk with God, unfolding within the beauty and frailty of our human context, is a gloriously symphonic adventure, filled with varied melodies, harmonies, and changes in rhythms and forms. We are creatures of faith and structure, mystery and forms, constantly enlightened and inspired by the divine intention that has shaped us since the foundation of the world.



The Giving of the Law on Mount Sinai
Engraving by Gustave Doré

For Pondering

- In your own walk, spiritual and religious, how has the grand odyssey of Judaism influenced your sense of God, or church, or scripture?
 - How do you experience the tension between the mystical and contemplative practices and the formal and legal structures of religious identity?
 - How would you hope to develop a richer balance between law and faith, or form and essence, in your own journey with God?
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