



Daily Reflections

JOURNEYING THROUGH CHALLENGING TIMES

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WALKING THE PATHS OF TRUTH & RIGHTEOUSNESS

By Father David C. Robinson, SJ

From Today's First Reading & Gospel

I, Tobit, have walked all the days of my life on the paths of truth and righteousness. I performed many charitable works for my kinsmen and my people who had been deported with me to Nineveh, in Assyria.... I said to my son, Tobiah: "My son, go out and try to find a poor man from among our kinsmen exiled here in Nineveh. If he is a sincere worshiper of God, bring him back with you, so that he can share this meal with me. Indeed, son, I shall wait for you to come back." Tobiah went out to look for some poor kinsman of ours. When he returned, he exclaimed, "Father!" I said to him, "What is it, son?" He answered, "Father, one of our people has been murdered! His body lies in the market place where he was just strangled!".... And I wept. Then at sunset I went out, dug a grave, and buried him.

TOBIT 1:3; 2:1-3;6-7

Jesus began to speak to the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders in parables. "A man planted a vineyard, put a hedge around it, dug a wine press, and built a tower. Then he leased it to tenant farmers and left on a journey. At the proper time he sent a servant to the tenants to obtain from them some of the produce of the vineyard. But they seized him, beat him, and sent him away empty-handed. Again, he sent them another servant. And that one they beat over the head and treated shamefully. He sent yet another whom they killed. So, too, many others; some they beat, others they killed. He had one other to send, a beloved son. He sent him to them last of all, thinking, 'They will respect my son.' But those tenants said to one another, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.'

MARK 12:1-8

Reflection

The story of Tobit is part of the Wisdom tradition in Jewish scriptural narratives. He is called as a faithful follower of the Law to maintain his fidelity to God's mandates, and to care for those who suffer. Having been deported to Nineveh in Assyria, he labors to fulfill the 'charitable works' which were at the heart of the peoples' life in exile. This make him a target for mockery and violence. When he is allowed to return home, his son Tobiah, sent to invite poor kinsmen to the Feast of Weeks, returns to announce that one of his people had been strangled. Tobit weeps for the loss, and then prepares to fulfill the ritual of burial after sunset.

REFLECTION CONTINUES BELOW



The sunset
Photo by Fr. David C. Robinson, SJ

Reflection Continued

The story of Tobit's blindness and healing is well known in scriptural circles. Similarly to Job, the virtuous man cleaves to God's commands, and is rewarded for his faithfulness, as the fullness of his life is returned to him. Fidelity becomes the source of longevity. In Mark 12, the allegory of the Vineyard and the Tenants delivers a similar message. The tenant farmers are those gifted with a fruitful garden in which to harvest the richness of God's blessings, as the people and ministers of Israel are granted the responsibility of the Law and the faith to bring the Covenant to fruition. Yet, the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders, the caretakers of the community, reject this sacred trust, and thus deserve to be cast out.

We, as people of faith and shepherds of God's commandments of love, can be drawn into the same illusions and deceptions of ego that undermined those charged with care of the community. Like Job, Tobit, and the disciples, we must maintain our own fidelity to planting and harvesting the fruits of the vineyard, to guarantee the endless harvest of Spirit which is our birthright and our legacy.

For Pondering

- How have you been invited to ‘till the soil’ in your own community of faith, so that others may benefit from God’s blessings?
 - Have you been tempted in a significant way to turn away from the ‘call’ that would deepen your own sense of life in ministry and service?
 - In what way do you experience life like Tobit—called to a rich journey with God while others are promoting selfishness and lack of respect?
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