

Lenten Homily
March 24, 2010

Thy Will Be Done I must admit that I chuckled a bit when I first read today's lesson from Daniel. I immediately flashed back to the Veggie Tales episode that is based on this reading where Nebuchadnezzar wanted Bob the Tomato, Larry the Cucumber, and Sprout the Asparagus to worship a giant chocolate bunny "god." Seriously, though, the words in Daniel that jump out to me are "If our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire and out of your hand, O king, let him deliver us. But if not, be it known, O king, that we will not serve your gods and we will not worship the golden statute that you have set up." Without saying it in so many words, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego said to God "Thy Will Be Done." They trust in God and do not condition their faith on whether He will save them from the furnace. They tell the king that nothing, not even the prospect of death, will sway their faith in God.

In the reading from John, the Jews who believed in Jesus are invited to follow His word, know the truth, and be made free. The Jews object saying that they have never been slaves, which, of course, they have. Jesus, however, is talking about being a slave to sin, which is defined by our catechism as "the seeking of our own will instead of the will of God, thus distorting our relationship with God, with other people, and with all creation." It continues "Sin has power over us because we lose our liberty when our relationship with God is distorted." So Jesus' invitation is to see in Him the relationship we can have with God when the relationship is not distorted by seeking our own interests over God's. In other words, we are invited to pray and live "Thy Will Be Done."

Now, I will be the first to admit that living into Jesus' invitation is anything but easy. When a family member faces a health challenge, when you face a financial crisis, when a relationship hits a rough patch – how many people try to bargain with God? God, if you just heal my family member, help me find a job, fix this relationship, I promise I will attend church regularly, give to the poor, etc. Yet, the lesson from Daniel and Jesus' invitation calls on us to drop the bargaining and live and pray "Thy Will Be Done." Still, Jesus understands that living into this is not easy. In fact, as we will hear next week, he struggled to do just this in Gethsemane. On the night before his crucifixion, Jesus prays "Abba, Father, all things are possible for You, Take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will."

I take comfort in the fact that I am not alone in my struggle to live into this prayer. My prayers often take the form of asking God for something and then adding "but Thy Will Be Done." This is usually quickly followed by "please give me the strength and grace to live into your will even if I do not understand it." These readings and Jesus' life implore us to have faith in God with no conditions attached and to become free by living into God's will instead of attempting to impose our own. This Lent and beyond, I will do my best to live into this even when I do not understand God's will and I invite you to do the same. Amen.

Margaret Drake