

Lenten homily
03/31/2010

It seems most appropriate that I speak about Isaiah's words, "God has given me the tongue of a teacher...." since I have spent the last 16+ years in education myself. Unintentionally, Isaiah referred to many aspects of education in this Old Testament lesson. Isaiah, one of the most esteemed prophets in the bible, was a man who predicted the birthplace of Jesus, prophesized the birth of Christ in the 8th century B.C., and was extraordinarily poetic. However, despite these virtues, in this text, he also admits to being insulted and spit upon as well as struck!

Today, one might think that this seems absolutely unthinkable; however, when we examine history and those who have been called to serve in the way that Isaiah is referring to, there are so many religious martyrs who were "spit upon", "struck" and even killed. We can quickly name some of the most famous ones, Martin Luther King, Jr., Ghandi and St. Peter, the apostle. In Isaiah 6:3, Isaiah himself was a sinner and he didn't believe that he could be God's voice until the burning coal was placed on his lips and he was made "clean" and he said to God, "I will go, send me...." He was called to serve and he promptly became a servant and devoted follower of God many years preceding Christ's birth. This vision of Isaiah being called by God to serve, to go out into the world and give of himself to others in need, (which might I add would include teachers... ☺) and then to be the victim of ridicule so closely mimics what children must endure in their classrooms and on the playground.

We teach our young people to live as Jesus has asked us to live, and to be followers of Christ in their daily lives and yet we must constantly remind them and ourselves that as Isaiah said, "... He who vindicates me is near..." and in the Psalm, "... Let those who take pleasure in my misfortune draw back and be disgraced." We must equip ourselves with the knowledge that if we serve God and love God in the classroom, on the playground and in our jobs, His incredible, indescribable compassion will embrace us and ultimately lead us to a place that we cannot even imagine in our most beautiful and wildest dreams.

The section from Hebrews that we heard tells us to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus... because of the joy that awaited Him in heaven He thought nothing of the disgrace of dying on the cross. This lesson, of course, is a difficult one to teach children who are persecuted for defending the rules, for the color of their skin, or for their inability to read grade level text. IF, however, as adults and teachers, we pray about our own path in life, we vow to serve God as he has called us to serve, and we model for children that God is our guardian and protector then students, children, teenagers, neighbors, friends and our family will also come to understand and appreciate God's grace and beauty that we as Christians are so blessed with. Ahh..... the joys of being a teacher!

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