

5 Sunday C

April 7, 2019

St. Patrick

From the responsorial psalm, Psalm 126, for this Lenten Sunday—

**“When the Lord brought back the captives of Zion,
we were like those who dream.”**

In my first homily when I came here to St. Patrick’s, I quoted from Father Greg Boyle’s first book. In his second book, Father Greg wrote about Carlos, who had been deported back to El Salvador, leaving behind his wife and daughter. Father G described his “most perilous odyssey” back to the States. A long journey by foot that took months, Carlos at times nearly starved or froze to death. Then, Father G wrote: “He made it as far as somewhere in Mexico, where a gang of robbers didn’t just relieve him of what little money and valuables he had, but stripped him naked and left him alone. Somehow he managed to tiptoe his way into a tiny Mexican village, hands shielding his genitals, darting between and behind trees... His torso was covered in gang tattoos. When people began to notice him, he explained that he’d been robbed. Villager after villager began to hand him pieces of clothing. After some time, there he stood, in the middle of no-damn-where, fully clothed in other people’s kindness. He was so overwhelmed by the fact that no one denied him or turned him away, ‘I made a promise, like a vow. I would be kind from now on because of these people’s kindness to me.’”

And he did, taking under his care a young mother with a daughter, until he got back to Los Angeles. At times he didn’t eat because he had given all the food he rounded up to the mother and child.

Father G ends the story by commenting, “Pope Francis states clearly, ‘Jesus wants to include’” (1).

The flight of refugees from the south of us typifies the mass migrations of those from Iraq and Syria to new lands. Africans, desperate for freedom and in poverty, have risked their lives on the Mediterranean Sea to reach Europe. All of these don’t choose to flee their native lands. Violence, hatred and misery really leave them with no other choice.

In this Sunday’s Mass, we hear Psalm 126, the ancient prayer of Jewish refugees from 2500 years ago. In 586 BC, after Jerusalem was leveled by Babylonian

invaders, the Jewish people were forced to leave Jerusalem for Babylon, a distance of more than 1600 miles.

In today's psalm we hear the actual cries of the war-weary refugees. As undocumented aliens, they imagine their return home: **“When the Lord brought back the captives of Zion, we thought we were dreaming.”** In fact, they *were* dreaming. For seventy years, they remained exiled, yearning that God would return them safely home (2).

Our first reading from the Prophet Isaiah speaks to these same refugees and migrants: **“Remember not the events of the past, the things of long ago consider not; see, I am doing something new!”**

God doesn't turn his back on those refugees in Babylon.

These Scriptures today speak to *our* world now, *our* time... and *our* response. The woman in today's Gospel, caught in adultery—oh, for the coming Good Friday, Pope Francis will dedicate his reflections to those enslaved by human trafficking. By the hundreds of thousands, the innocent must forgo their very bodies to the cruel caprice of their captives—for sex, for labor.

“Remember not the events of the past, the things of long ago consider not; see, I am doing something new!”

Friends: In the end, we are all naked in our need. The naked Carlos was clothed by the kindness of poor villagers. They saw they were family. **“I am doing something new,”** so God still promises. God keeps opening our eyes, enlarging our vision to see how linked we all are.

“Pope Francis states it clearly, ‘Jesus wants to include.’”

(1) The quotes are taken from Gregory Boyle, Barking to the Choir: The Power of Radical Kinship (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2017), pp. 169-70.

(2) I am indebted to Craig E. Morrison, O.Carm., for his exegesis of Psalm 126 and Isaiah 43, and linking them to our world today, in “Within the Word: Dreaming of Home,” Give Us This Day--April 2019 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2019), pp. 90-91.

General Intercessions

April 7, 2019

5th Sunday of Lent

Animate the works of prayer, charity and justice in your church; we pray to you, O Lord—

Help us to fix our hearts on your will, and strengthen us to bear our crosses in love; we pray to you, O Lord—

Be with our parish next weekend as we face together the clergy sex abuse crisis in the church; we pray to you, O Lord—

Give patience and encouragement to those who care for the elderly, infirm, or those with special needs; we pray to you, O Lord—

Inspire nations and churches to greater concern and action on behalf of immigrants, migrants, and refugees; we pray to you, O Lord—

Renew the spirits of those who are disillusioned, discouraged, or depressed; we pray to you, O Lord—