

Second Conference: From the Jordan to Jerusalem

Second Conference - He wants to give us more than we would ask for or imagine.

*Expectation and Preparation there is **Visitation and Manifestation***

Welcome:

Prayer:

Some points from the first conference:

We have entered Lent from different spiritual “places” and with different expectations. But our presence here is an indication of an openness of heart. We want the Lord to grant us something “more”. We are willing to enter into a process of spiritual preparation, so that we can receive what He wills to give us this Lent. We have come together to walk with him on his way to Jerusalem.

In our reflection on the experience of the Lord in the desert temptations we encountered three aspects of the Kingdom: his/our (for we are his disciples and we are companions on this journey) relationship with the material world, his/our relationship with others and his/our relationship with God, Our Father.

His understanding – that the kingdom is not ultimately of this world, that it is essentially a life of service, and that it is rooted in an intimate and loving relationship with the Father. If we seek to follow him, then we must live the life of his Kingdom.

These three relationships (with the world, others and the Lord) are bound together in the coming of the Kingdom. In order to enter into and grow in the Kingdom, we have to confront our tendency to use the creation for our own gratification, our tendency to seek to manipulate and control others for our own advantage and our tendency to get caught up in the activities of our life and forget or even test God’s love by doing things which we know are not his Kingdom, not of his will but of ours.

And so, our Lenten activities should involve these three relationships so as to **free us** from an inappropriate dependence on material things, **sensitize us** to the needs of those around us and **deepen our relationship of** intimacy with God.

And He himself has given us counsel on how to enter into and live the Kingdom.

Listen to a familiar gospel passage:

Matt: 6: 1-18

“When you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites. They neglect their appearance, so that they may appear to others to be fasting. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward.

But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you may not appear to others to be fasting, except to your Father who is hidden. And your Father who sees what is hidden will repay you.

“ take care not to perform righteous deeds in order that people may see them; otherwise, you will have no recompense from your heavenly Father.

When you give alms, do not blow a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets to win the praise of others. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward.

But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right is doing, so that your almsgiving may be secret. And your Father who sees in secret will repay you.

“When you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, who love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on street corners so that others may see them. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward.

But when you pray, go to your inner room, close the door, and pray to your Father in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will repay you.

In praying, do not babble like the pagans, who think that they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them.

Your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

And He continues to guide and grace us through the writings of the saints, and the traditions of his Church, which is his continuing presence in the world.

Suggestions for fasting

Some things that is a **blessing** - a source of enjoyment.

For Fasting from this intensifies our appreciation of the gift – and increases our gratitude to God.

Something that is a **curse** - a source of harm to myself, to others or to my relationship with God.

For Fasting from this frees us and brings healing – And increases our capacity to respond to what is truly important in our relationships.

For guidance in this look at your examination of conscience. Ask someone who knows you well or if you really want to take a risk – as your spouse.

Something that we do **frequently** – for this increases our awareness of the continuous presence of God.

Something that puts us in **solidarity** with others

for this Fasting strengthens our relationship with others through a greater appreciation of their condition.

For guidance – look at a newspaper or internet news service.

Suggestions for almsgiving

Respect the dignity of others - for understand that it more His **Justice** than our generosity to give to those who are in need.

Alms are not so much a gift as an obligation arising from what is just.

Let it proceed from a **true concern and love** for the good of others.

Go past what is comfortable and convenient. It should **cost us something**.

Do something **Communal**. A family commitment strengthens family bonds and extends that bond to others.

Suggestions for prayer

Give time – regularly, frequently, in various amounts

Set time aside, but also punctuate your day.

He is pouring his grace on us all the time

but only when we open our hearts can his grace enter our souls.

Make it thoughtful – give thought to whom you are speaking and who you are speaking about.

Prayer your “God moments” – write a list of them

Pray your weaknesses

Pray your blessings

But also give thought to others and their needs

Have a Prayer Journal

Keep it simple - be honest – speak from your heart and personal-
in your own words

Including your distractions – then return to your intended prayer
(some people’s minds can easily stay focused, other’s it is a
real struggle.)

A variety of forms keeps it fresh

Devotional prayers: rosary, Divine mercy, Litanies, patronal prayers,

Pray the Life of the Lord – meditate on the scripture –

place yourself in the scene.

Walking meditation with the Lord.

Hymns – let your heart “hum” with hymns

Prayers on the Spirit

Eucharistic Prayer

Listen – fall silent at times - listen with your heart,

be sensitive to images in your mind

Let us Pray for guidance in selecting and grace for living our Lenten commitments.

In today's conference, we begin to follow Jesus on the way to Jerusalem.

Yesterday we reflected on our personal expectations for Lent and we have just reflected on the preparatory activities that the Lord and the church recommend.

Where there is Expectation, there has to be Preparation.

Where there is Expectation, and Preparation, there will be a Visitation – He will come – in surprising and subtle ways in miraculous and mundane but he will come.

The Lord comes to those who are “ready” to receive him - at just the right moment. Whether we think it is the right moment or not.

Soteriology: Sufficient Grace an invitation to a deeper relationship with God. It may take the form a challenge or consolation, it may be subtle or miraculous.

The Lord visits the synagogue in Nazareth where he reads the scripture, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me ... and then tells them that “Today, this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing. He announces the Kingdom of God. But then challenges them to a deeper understand that the Kingdom is bigger than they had conceived. He finds that few accept him there.

But in Capernaum he finds Peter, Andrew, James and John. We know from John's gospel that Andrew has been searching in expectation for the messiah. And his heart was prepared to receive Jesus' call. After the miracle of the great catch of fish, He challenges them to abandon the security of their nets. This group accepts the challenge and begins the journey with Jesus.

And so we too have been invited to discipleship and to join him the road to Jerusalem. We come with him to a small town.

Luke 5:17-26

One day as Jesus was teaching,

Pharisees and teachers of the law were sitting there

who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and Jerusalem,

and the power of the Lord was with him for healing.

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And some men brought on a stretcher a man who was paralyzed;

they were trying to bring him in and set [him] in his presence.
But not finding a way to bring him in because of the crowd,
they went up on the roof
and lowered him on the stretcher through the tiles
into the middle in front of Jesus.

When he saw their faith, he said, “As for you, your sins are forgiven.”

Then the scribes and Pharisees began to ask themselves,

“Who is this who speaks blasphemies?

Who but God alone can forgive sins?”

Jesus knew their thoughts and said to them in reply,

“What are you thinking in your hearts?

Which is easier, to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Rise and walk’?

But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins” —

he said to the man who was paralyzed,

“I say to you, rise, pick up your stretcher, and go home.”

He stood up immediately before them, picked up what he had been lying on,
and went home, glorifying God.

Then astonishment seized them all and they glorified God,

and, struck with awe, they said, “We have seen incredible things today.”

They must have heard of Jesus miracles because in **expectation** they **prepared** their friend by placing him on a mat and carrying him to Jesus.

Where there is Expectation, there is preparation, and where there is preparation there is Visitation. The Lord had come to his people.

They believed that Jesus could cure him, - that is a step of faith but Jesus wants to take them deeper.

The Kingdom is deeper than stones turned to bread, than cures of paralysis. He wants to bring them/us a deeper healing. A healing for our souls, for our relationship with the Father.

Seeing that their hearts were open the first thing he says to the paralytic is “My son, your sins are forgiven.” He **manifests** the true character of the Kingdom. And those around him see the manifestation - for the question arises in their hearts. “How can he say this? Who does he think he is? Only God can forgive sins.”

Where there is expectation, there is preparation, where there is preparation there is Visitation and where there is Visitation there is Manifestation.

He has revealed himself – God’s mercy among us. Now the response is up to each of them.

Many of them began to give praise to God? WHY? For some because he had cured the paralysis of the man’s body – the stones had become bread. But, for others because he revealed the hope of God’s forgiveness – the word of God nourished hope in their souls.

That despite their own sins, **“My history does not determine my destiny.”**

What about us? When we began this Lent, what were we hoping for? What did we want the Lord to do for us? What was the “More” we were looking for? - to change our habits? to heal our body? or our relationships?

He offers us hope for all these things, but he wants to take us deeper, deeper into a relationship with himself and the Father. A healing, life-giving relationship. The first step is the removal and healing of the spiritual paralysis that holds us prisoner, that holds us back from him. Rise, take up your mat and come home!

With the Church, He invites us, this Lent, to experience this healing in our lives through the sacrament of reconciliation. This was what those who came to the Jordan to hear John preach were called to do. Is this part of the plan we have for our Lenten journey?

And there is More. More than the healing and strengthening of our bodies, more than the changing of our habits, attitudes, and our hardness of heart. To be truly **with Him** on this journey we cannot remain simply spectators, we must become disciples.

And so we continue the Journey and we arrive at Sychar.

With Jesus on the Way – John 4: 4-42

The Woman at the Well

So he came to a town of Samaria called Sychar,
near the plot of land that Jacob had given to his son Joseph.
Jacob's well was there.
Jesus, tired from his journey, sat down there at the well. It was about noon.

A woman of Samaria came to draw water.
Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink."
His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.

The Samaritan woman said to him,
"How can you, a Jew, ask me, a Samaritan woman, for a drink?"
(For Jews use nothing in common with Samaritans.)
Jesus answered and said to her,
"If you knew the gift of God and who is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,'
you would have asked him and he would have given you living water."
[The woman] said to him, "Sir, you do not even have a bucket and the well is deep;
where then can you get this living water?
Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us this well ?
and drank from it himself with his children and his flocks?"
Jesus answered and said to her, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty
again; but whoever drinks the water I shall give will never thirst;
the water I shall give will become in him a spring of water
welling up to eternal life."
The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water,
so that I may not be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water."

Jesus said to her, "Go call your husband and come back."
The woman answered and said to him, "I do not have a husband."
Jesus answered her, "You are right in saying, 'I do not have a husband.'
For you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your
husband.
What you have said is true."

The woman said to him, "Sir, I can see that you are a prophet.
Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain;
but you people say that the place to worship is in Jerusalem."

Jesus said to her, "Believe me, woman, the hour is coming
when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem.
You people worship what you do not understand;
we worship what we understand, because salvation is from the Jews.
But the hour is coming, and is now here,
when true worshipers will worship the Father in Spirit and truth;
and indeed the Father seeks such people to worship him.
God is Spirit, and those who worship him must worship in Spirit and truth."

The woman said to him, "I know that the Messiah is coming,
the one called the Anointed; when he comes, he will tell us everything."
Jesus said to her, "I am he, the one who is speaking with you."

At that moment his disciples returned,
and were amazed that he was talking with a woman,
but still no one said, "What are you looking for?" or
"Why are you talking with her?"

The woman left her water jar and went into the town and said to the people,
"Come see a man who told me everything I have done.
Could he possibly be the Messiah?"

They went out of the town and came to him.

Many of the Samaritans of that town began to believe in him
because of the word of the woman who testified,
"He told me everything I have done."

When the Samaritans came to him, they invited him to stay with them;
and he stayed there two days.

Many more began to believe in him because of his word,
and they said to the woman,
"We no longer believe because of your word;
for we have heard for ourselves,
and we know that this is truly the savior of the world."

Jesus knew the true thirst of her soul.

She was looking for water to quench her physical thirst, but he knew that she had been searching, searching for quite some time to quench her spiritual thirst. She had gone from one relationship to another looking for something she could not quite identify. He knew what her soul was longing for and he waited for her at the well. He knew she was ready.

The Lord knows what our souls really long for and need – even more clearly than we ourselves know. He knew her past. The broken relationships the dashed hopes. The betrayal and anger and disappointment. He knows all the mistaken paths we have walked. But he wants us to know that *our history does not determine our destiny*.

He knew the religious questions that afflicted her soul, the questions that seemingly had no satisfactory answer. Who is right, what does God want. When is he coming? Where can I find him? Why doesn't he reveal himself to me? He knew the misunderstanding of the Apostles, their doubts and fears. He knows the doubts and questions that plague our soul, that stand in the way of a deeper relationship with him.

What is this sense of incompleteness? Why am I still unsatisfied? Why is this happening to me? To my loved ones? Doesn't He care?

He looked into her soul and spoke to her heart. He offered her the truth that both convicted and freed her and that having freed her moved her to share her story with others in the town.

He visits us in our minds and souls, so that we can begin to trust him more completely, so that we can find some spiritual peace. A peace which comes only from our trust in him and his compassionate love for us. He knows that it is not only our sins but our lack of understanding and our fears that prevent us from a deeper relationship with him. And that it is only in trusting in him that our souls can find the peace we thirst for.

What is it are you looking for, longing for this Lent? What would be "living water" for your thirsting soul?

Let us pray: