



Grain

“Be attentive, be intelligent, be responsible, be loving, and, if necessary, change. Bernard Lonergan, S.J.

Submitted by Peter Bakken, Madison, WI

Field

“1 Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. 2 Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. 3 For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. 4 Against you, you alone, have I sinned, and done what is evil in your sight... 8 Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have crushed rejoice. 9 Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. 10 Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me. 11 Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take your holy spirit from me. 12 Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and sustain in me a willing spirit.” Psalm 51:1-6, 8-12

Thoughts

You don't have to know the history behind Psalm 51 to be carried into meditation by chanting or speaking its words, as many will do on Ash Wednesday. The ageless poetry invites us to sit in honesty before God. The things we have trouble saying to others and even struggle admitting to ourselves we allow to surface in confession before our compassionate God. Does the reading become more powerful recalling that the context is attributed to David anguishing in guilt over having committed murder and adultery or does it become troubling? It's God's love that is the focus of the Psalm.

Christian life is largely about simple repentance and forgiveness. What happens when we live off of a perfection script and believe we can do no wrong, or judge our own mistakes and those of others without confession and hope in forgiveness? Life becomes pretty superficial and loses dimension. As Walter Brueggeman says, “The Psalms trace out a world that is a counter world. They remind us that in our baptism we sign up for a different world.”

At the root of so many of our systemic problems erupting in hate groups and dialogue about immigration reform traded with judgments and lies about entire groups of people is a spiritual problem. The counter world we signed up for challenges false thinking about our own sense of superiority or inferiority and that of our neighbor. During Lent we are reminded to be honest about all of this.

As we ask for grace to repent we not only find what is difficult to face but what is beautiful in our being. Create in me, in us, a clean heart, oh God. Happy Monday!

Prayer

Highly recommended.

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Many blessings upon you,

Pastor Cindy