

Lenten Reflection

Friday, March 18, 2016

*By Joanne Andiorio,
Administrator, St. Joseph Center & Providence Manor*



Here we are in the fifth week of Lent and the readings for today are pretty heavy for Jeremiah and Jesus and us. But, happily, the ultimate message in today's readings is very clear: place your trust in the Lord! In the first reading, Jeremiah is very troubled because even his friends are betraying him, watching his every move, trying to trap him and see him fail. Jeremiah is stunned, angry, hurt, and wants to seek revenge on these betrayers. But then, in his anguish, he has that wonderful gift that God gives us – that gift of grace that enables us to take the high road when we are confronted with injustice. Jeremiah experiencing God's goodness proclaims, "But the Lord is with me, like a mighty champion. My persecutors will stumble, they will not triumph." That belief may be hard to celebrate when those you trust are seeking your downfall! But it is true and the responsorial psalm today is at the heart of how Jeremiah and all of us get through tough moments when the psalmist prays, "In my distress, I called upon the Lord, and he heard my cry." That is what it's all about – knowing that God is beside us every moment in every situation as the one who never abandons us. In our humanity, there is always the possibility of being betrayed or being the betrayer, for we still are human, sinful and in need of forgiveness even though we are redeemed. Being in those predicaments sometimes makes it hard for us to rely on the Lord when we want to take things into our own hands. But, that steadfast love of God for us is the reality that is our deepest strength in times of trouble and confusion. It awakens us and saves us from retaliating or seeking revenge. The Gospel continues that awful sense of misunderstanding, false accusations and abandonment when the Jews try to stone Jesus because he says that he is the Son of God. Jesus tries to tell them to look at their own scriptures, and look at the good Jesus is doing performing his Father's works. Sort of in astonishment, Jesus challenges them saying can't you tell by those works that I am who I say I am? But, they would have none of it and they try to arrest him. He gets away and goes back across the Jordan where many people came to him and began to believe in him. Of course, the non-believers won't budge in their opinions of Jesus, and soon, he will be led to Calvary where he continues to do the work of his Father. He accepts death and he will rise on that third day so that we are saved, are reconciled to the Father, and will have life eternal. Why would any of us not trust in this Jesus? In our belief that God is our strength, let us say this mantra at times during the day as our prayer expressing our trust in the Lord:

My God, my rock of refuge, my shield, the horn of my salvation, my stronghold!