

Novena of Grace – Day 5

A simple word, I want offer today really is listening, listening. So it is in the psalm today and the first reading that we heard, Jeremiah's words, listen to the voice of God coming to him the prophet Jeremiah. "Listen to my voice, then I will be your God and you shall be my people!". Over and over, that was the message that Jeremiah heard over his 45 years of ministry. He lived for a long time and his whole life could be described as failure, because everything fell apart on him and he was always rejected. Yet, over and over this message would come in some way, listen to my voice, the voice of God. Listen!

The Psalm, "O that today you would listen to his voice! Harden not your hearts"... and that's important, listen to the voice of the Lord and harden not your hearts, be open, listen and we see in Gospel that some wanted a sign from heaven. It can often be that we close our hearts and close our ears. Open your hearts, open your hearts. The way the Lord speaks, unless you become like a little child you cannot enter the kingdom of God, which means the openness of spirit, dependency and all that. Openness. And then you're open to the kingdom of God. So, offer ourselves this day, your life and mine, can I listen?

So in the rush and stress of today's life, there's no time to listen really. But there would be a lot of talk, but really listening, in the heart, if someone is talking to me. Ultimately, listening, is our faith.

The theme of this Novena, hearing God's of Word of the Lord, "For God So Loved the World". God so loves the World that he gives us everything, he gives us his heart, he gives us his only son, he pours out everything for us. That's the meaning of the cross. He takes it unto himself the sin the World, that we would not be lost but have eternal life. So, I think, listening each day in some ways is a big part of faith. It may be listening to another, listening to my own heart in a way, if I may put it that way. Listening. Listening to the word of God.

The living Lord speaks in some way through another, through the Word of God, through the sacraments, it's there. Listen to the voice of the Lord and each other, that's a matter for our hearts. The heart, I was talking about that yesterday. The heart is a place of prayer, people often say to me, "I'm not praying well" or "prayer's dropped out". Their heart is the place of prayer, the Holy Spirit prays with us, even when we don't know how to pray. The Spirit, is praying with us. Prayer goes on 24 hours a day, I may not be tuned into it, but it's going on.

The music of God, the beautiful music we hear in the church is a sign of God. But the Music of God, the music of the blessed Trinity, the music of the people gone before us and those on the earth, the melody of God is there, but I have to tune into it. I'm used to the old radios, I don't know the modern ones very well, where you have knobs and you have to tune carefully into a frequency, and sometimes all you got was static. Maybe, I tune into the melody of prayer and I get a lot of static, but it's going on, night and day, waking or sleeping. No matter what you do, there is prayer going on tune into it, get to the melody of it. Prayer, it's there and going on.

The heart, listening. The heart of Mary. I was thinking about that quite a bit, those words that twice describes this phrase in Luke's Gospel, "Mary, pondered all these things and treasured them in her heart". Mary pondered and reflected on all these things and treasured them in her heart. The heart of Mary, the heart of each one of us, today, International Women's day and the heart, listening to others, to children, to the grandchildren, to one another. The value of listening. The heart of a mother, who listens. That's so important, Mary pondered all these things and treasured them in her heart, listening.

As Father Xavier was talking about St Francis travelling through Japan, after 3 years in India, he was listening to something and we set out in a great voyage to Malaccas, first of all, near Singapore. My father was there years and years ago, we used to have a Malacca cane at home. Then, he travelled on from there to the islands of Indonesia, The Muuncas. He came very close to yet undiscovered Australia. But he was listening, he was following the voice of the Lord in some way, as best he could. Then, ultimately back to India, he had to go back and then the whole thing about Japan, something tells me, my heart tells me I have to go to Japan, which had only been discovered by European 5 years earlier. So an amazing journey began. Listening, following.

I think, Edith Stein (otherwise known as St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross) in 20th century, her listening. Jewish in background, born on the day of atonement. That was all significant for her, which ultimately reflects our Lord's love to the end. Her young life, a young girl growing, talented, intellectual, the faith of her Jewish Mother was very important to her. But ultimately, the journey led on and through a couple, a Lutheran couple, she came to Christian faith. Something about it drew her in very strongly. because the husband of that couple was killed in the first world war. Edith, saw the faith of the widow, of the woman who was left. Which led her to the life of St Theresa of Avilla, she was very involved in Catholic woman's movement in the 30's, then she joined the Carmelites and wrote a bit, till her life was offered up in Auschwitz concentration camp, where they died in the gas chamber on 9 August 1942.

Listening and following, it's so important for us to listen. Listen to the voice of the Lord this day, in the sunlight, in the first signs of spring after the snow. I was saying it last night, the heart is universally as is listening. Our hearts as Saint Thérèse of Lisieux, the other co-patron of the Mission. Our hearts go out, even when we're struggling with the bits and pieces of our lives. Our hearts go out to the needs of people, whether we can help or not, Troicair for example, the needs of people. People close to us. There's a wonderful text of St. Augustine, if I may mention him. He's reflecting on the Psalm and he hears the words of Psalm 61 in Bible and 141. Hear my cry/Listen to my prayer as I cry from the depths of the earth. And here's Christ calling from the depth of the Earth, for all people and all their needs, Christ is calling out. "Hear my cry as I call from the ends of the Earth, when my heart was in tribulation and trouble." All people from all corners of the Earth, such as issues in Congo, Fr Richard in Sudan, Fr Gerry in Chad. Our hearts are universally and keep them that way. No person is immune to the struggles of life. But our heart and our prayer goes out.

The heart is the source of our lives, our humanity, our faith and may we have a listening heart and listen. Listen to the cry of the poor, listen to the voice of the Lord, listen to that central message which is ours. God so loves the World, that he gives us everything, his Beloved Son, he pours that out in love, for us and for all, so that we would not be lost or stray away but have eternal life. God's love will always be in our hearts, and through our own love and as humanity as we feel, often fragile and failing in that, the love of God and Christ go out to other. That's our calling, that's our privilege, that's our joy.