

Homily of Fifth Week of Lent, Year B

Jeremiah was sent by God to prophesy to the Jews at a time when political and religious leaders offended God so much. There were a lot of corruption and injustice in the land. The political leaders did not mind what was going on. They did not believe that corruption and injustice could make them lose favor with God and, therefore, bring destruction to their land. They said to themselves, "We have Abraham, Isaac, and Moses as our fathers. God made covenant with us. Nothing can change the covenant. We have the temple."

But Jeremiah prophesied to them that the temple would be destroyed and the old covenant would no longer hold. Jeremiah prophesied the nature of the new covenant as we see in the first reading, "But this is covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord. I will place my law within them and write it upon their hearts; I will be their God, and they shall be my people." The covenant was no longer going to be only the one written on scrolls and tablets of stone, but the one written on their hearts.

The Gospel shows that Jesus is the fulfillment of the new covenant. He came for the renewal of heart and forgiveness of sin. The renewal of heart is at the center of Jesus' ministry. Let us reflect on some invitations from Jesus concerning renewal of heart:

Matthew 5:8, "Blessed are the pure of **heart** for they shall see God."

Matthew 15:19, "Indeed, it is from the **heart** that evil desires come: murder, adultery, immorality, theft, lies, slander."

Matthew 11:29, "Learn from me for I am gentle and humble of **heart**."

Matthew 18:35, "So my heavenly father will not forgive every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your **heart**."

This is an invitation to personal renewal of our covenants with God: baptismal covenant, confirmation covenant, matrimonial covenant, ordination covenant, and others. God wrote all these covenants upon our hearts. Some of us have deleted the covenants by our wrong doings, and for some of us, our sins and weaknesses have blurred God's writings. God's words on our hearts are no longer readable, and therefore ineffective. Lent is a season of grace during which the covenants can be restored. Our Lenten observances of prayer, fasting, almsgiving and repentance will help to restore our covenants with God. The parish's Penitential Service on the 26th of March is, also, a wonderful opportunity to restore our covenant with God.

Fr Martin Eke, MSP