

Serving Berlin's English-speaking Catholic Community since 1957



Catholic Community

Member of the English-Speaking Mission

Mass: Fridays at 6 p.m. in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel

Sundays at 10 a.m. in the main Sanctuary

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Office Hours: Mondays and Thursdays 10-12

August 14th, 2016 – Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Readings (Missal p 201 et seqq.): Jer 38:4-6, 8-10 • Ps 40:2-4, 18 • Heb 12:1-4 • Lk 12:49-53

Celebrant: Fr Sylvester Ajunwa

Practically nothing in Scripture was written by eyewitness – not even our gospels.

Only after years, or even decades of reflecting on God's actions in their lives did our sacred authors eventually compose the writings that make up our Sacred Scriptures. Though many of the people involved in their narratives seemed to understand the implications of those divine actions as they were actually taking place, scholars constantly remind us that such insights most probably didn't become part of their faith lives until far down the road. Even today we often catch ourselves saying, "I didn't notice it at the time, but . . ."

One need only Google Christopher Chabris and Daniel Simons' famous "Invisible Gorilla" experiment to see how easy it is to miss things that happen right before our eyes. The two professors demonstrated that our eyes normally see only what our minds program them to see. If we're not expecting it, we usually don't see it. On a practical level, experts tell us that's why motorcycles are so frequently involved in highway accidents. Drivers of cars are geared to see other cars, not motorcycles. (Based on that insight, yard signs have recently appeared in our area encouraging us to "Watch Out for Motorcycles!")

On a Scriptural level, that also seems why we have today's three liturgical readings. Our sacred authors are concerned that we not only discover what happened to them, but that we also be prepared to discover those same things and events happening in our own lives. If we're not prepared to have them take place, we'll rarely notice them taking place.

Our Wisdom author is convinced that only those enslaved Israelites who were anticipating Yahweh to destroy their foes actually interpreted the Exodus correctly. Historically, according to the Exodus author, the majority of Jews in Egypt argued against Moses. What turned out to be the greatest saving event in Jewish history started as a huge aggravation. Especially the Torah's Yahwistic author reminds us of the people's constant "gripping." They'd have been more content eating watermelon as slaves along the Nile than crossing the Reed Sea as free people. What a chosen few saw, most ignored.

The author of Hebrews wants to make certain such blindness never happens to Jesus' followers. So he constantly hammers away at Abraham and Sarah's faith. Presuming they're the first Jews, they don't have Yahweh's track record to fall back on. Only their faith helps them see Yahweh's hand in the daily events of their life. They didn't emigrate from Ur to Canaan, for instance, simply to acquire more food in a foreign land, but because Yahweh had a unique plan for them and their descendants. Likewise, they didn't engage in intimate relations because of any physical attraction but because that was an essential part of God providing them with an heir. Our sacred authors are convinced that faith enables us to notice what others ignore.

That seems to be why Luke's Jesus wants us to be certain about where our "treasure" is located. Those who consistently "sell their belongings and give alms" will also be the ones who are consistently prepared to notice the risen Jesus present in their lives. Those who focus on caring for the needs of others will also be focusing on experiencing God's kingdom in their midst. The historical Jesus presumed his followers would see what he chose to see during his earthly ministry. That was the only way they would be his faithful and prudent stewards.

Perhaps it would be more faith effective to replace some of our elaborate church decorations with simple yard signs reading, "Watch For God Working In Your Lives!"