

March 30, 2017

Jn 5:31-47

I begin by reflecting back at one specific aspect in the Exodus reading.

The author begins by rebuking the Israelites for neglecting the Noah covenant that binds them to Yahweh. Similarly, the author reminds us to be wary of the many types of gods engrained in the very fabric of our world today. Similar to the Israelites, our dementia and deftness are impeding us and making us lose sight of Yahweh's presence in our world, just like the false golden calf in today's reading.

In Yahweh's reproach to the Israelites, he reminds them of the time when, with might and power, he freed them from Egypt, and fed and led them through the desert. And yet, despite Yahweh's bounty, the Israelites seem to have fallen into their wicked ways, including slacking in loyalty and breaking their commitment to the covenant set in place with previous patriarchs that tied both parties in their commitment to one another.

Coming across this set of readings makes me reflect on the sacrament of marriage.

We live in such a tumultuous and changing world when it comes to relationships and marriage. Exodus reminds us of the covenant aspect of marriage that our society neither understands nor subscribes to, or simply refuses to uphold. And yet, this is one aspect of our faith that truly stands out. It is our very understanding that when two parties come together in front of a priest and an ecclesial community, and profess their love to one another, they are embodying and modeling Yahweh's Old Testament theology of relationships and love.

The Gospel of John further emphasizes and catapults the same message I continue to convey today to others. The last few verses of the reading identifies society's current neglectful nature and lack of love mirrored in the fast pace nature we use to conduct our affairs, in our busy work schedules and lack of time for others: "I know that you do not have the love of God in you" (Jn 5:31-47).

Notice the interwoven theme in both readings in which we are reminded of the subtle, yet, faithful and constant presence of the Father in the life of his beloved. I end by underlining Jesus' reassuring words that discloses the Father's never changing commitment to us and to the covenant that still binds us with him. Yahweh's actions continue to dispel a God whose concrete actions reveal his unconditional nature of love. Unlike the false idol calf, which crippled faith by mere human invention, in contrast, Yahweh is a higher force who is revealed from generation to generation, knowing no bounds.

Reflection questions:

What false gods at times keep you chained and a prisoner?

How do you nurture your covenant of love with your family, others and God?

Reflection by Johan Alexander Castaneda, a Bishop Noll Institute theology teacher.