

April 5, 2017

Daniel 3:14-20, 91-92, 95

John 8:31-42

As student in Catholic School, I was taught the goal of our Lenten journey is always the same: to have a deeper relationship with God at Easter than ever before. This is modeled for us today in the Book of Daniel and the Gospel of John.

When challenged by King Nebuchadnezzar with death in the white hot furnace or betraying their God, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego had no fear of his royal edict. Contemplate this verse from the first reading: "There is no need for us to defend ourselves before you in this matter. If our God, whom we serve, can save us from the white-hot furnace and from your hands, O king, may he save us! But even if he will not, know, O king, that we will not serve your god or worship the golden statue that you set up." (Dn. 3:17-18) They did not know if God would rescue them. However, their trust in God was so deep that it gave them the freedom to choose not to sin by giving in to the command of an earthly king but die in the grace of the unseen God.

Jesus reinforces the actions of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego by telling his disciples, "If you remain in my word, you will truly be my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." (Jn. 8:31-32) He goes on to remind them that when they sin they are giving up their birth right as children of Abraham to the freedom that God desires to bestow on them. Succumbing to sin draws us away from a relationship with God to stand in the white hot furnace unprotected, alone, naked and afraid, rather than the grace and protection of "the fourth looks like a son of God." (Dn. 3:92).

As you continue the final days of your Lenten journey remember and reflect on drawing nearer to the fourth person that was seen in the white hot furnace. It is he who protects all of the children of who do the work of our father Abraham.

Reflection questions:

1. Will your Lenten journey deepen your relationship with God?
2. In the Lord's Prayer we say, "Our Father who art in Heaven." At the end of this Gospel passage, Jesus says, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and am here; I did not come on my own, but he sent me." (Jn. 8:42) Is calling God "Father" an acknowledgement and expression of love for Jesus or just words?

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