

In our journey of Lent, we are now approaching the culmination of our walk with the Lord. Next Sunday, we celebrate with the crowds the kingship of Jesus as He enters Jerusalem and then we move into the solemnity of Holy week which brings us to Easter when we see the kingship of Jesus over death, the final enemy. Today, we are called by our readings to ponder on the question: **Am I living out my covenant relationship with God and what does this covenant relationship involve?**

The first reading from Jeremiah mentions the word “covenant” 3 times. Kings in the Old Testament often entered into covenants with neighbouring kings. Such covenants were usually between 2 kings and they required action from one party and a corresponding promise from the other party. Thus one king would for instance pay a large sum of money and the other would promise, in return, protection in case his kingdom was attacked by a foreign enemy. Covenants were like modern treaties or pacts between nations.

Following this formula, the Bible has a number of references to covenants between God and His people, Israel. Jeremiah today reminds the people of the covenant that God made with the Jews through Moses. The 10 commandments given at Sinai were a covenant by which God promised that if the people followed these commandments, God in turn would protect them. Jeremiah uses the analogy of a marriage to describe the covenant of Yahweh and His people. This is a much more intimate and personal relationship than one between kings. Jeremiah laments the fact that the people were not faithful to their side of the treaty or covenant. They broke the commandments many times which rendered void their covenant with God and removed the protection that He had promised to them.

But fortunately for the Israelites and fortunately for us today, our God is not only a God of justice but one of great, great mercy. God promises the Jewish nation that He will forgive them and remember their sin no longer. He will in fact write His Law not on tablets of stone (as He did with the 10 commandments) but He will write them on their hearts. The heart is the organ of our body that is so vital that it is essential for our life. It is also the area where our real passions and emotions reside. Thus God is in fact saying: I will put in you a real desire for me, you will not need someone else to teach you for you will be driven by your own heart.

We have our own covenant with God. In baptism, we have a desire for Him written on our heart, our sins have been forgiven and we are in a new covenant relationship with God.

What does this new covenant involve?

The Greeks came and said to Philip “We wish to see Jesus”. Each of us too wishes to see God. We wish to see Him in our daily lives, we wish to see His protection of us, and we wish to be assured of His love and mercy for us. And Jesus brings them to the understanding of the new covenant relationship that they and we have. He says; if you want to know the Father, you must follow me. **The Father honours those who follow me, in other words those who are my disciples.**

But what is the sign of true discipleship? The answer is found both in the second reading as well as the Gospel. **The answer in both cases is the same-it is obedience.** The Gospel tells us that Jesus was troubled and greatly distressed by the impending events of His agony, torture, crucifixion and death. Yes, He does cringe in great fear of these events. But He does not ask His Father to save Him from them. He realises that His covenant with the Father requires that He suffer and die a terrible death on the cross. The Father on His part promises that he will glorify

Jesus as He did when Jesus rose from the dead. The same sentiment of obedience is echoed in the second reading “Although He was a Son, He learned obedience.”

Just as in the Old Testament, obedience was necessary for God’s protection of Israel, so is our obedience necessary under the New covenant. The difference lies in the fact that in the Old Testament, obedience was required to the Law represented by the 10 commandments, under the new covenant, received through our baptism, obedience means being good disciples of Jesus because the Father honours those who follow Jesus. This is obedience to the commandment to love both God and our fellow men with all our heart.

How am I living out my covenant relationship under the New Covenant? What type of a disciple am I? Is Christ written on my heart? As we gear up towards the final two weeks of Lent, let us both take stock and motivate ourselves in our journey keeping before us the great act of obedience that Jesus gave us upon the Cross. Let us be faithful to our baptismal covenant of new life in Jesus Christ.