

the CATHOLIC NAVIGATOR

Charting a Course to Christ

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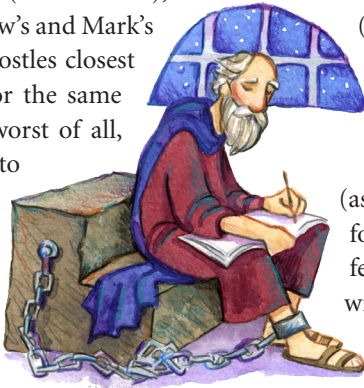
Chasing Holiness: SPIRITUAL WORKS OF MERCY – “BEAR ALL WRONGS PATIENTLY”

“**B**ear all wrongs patiently” is one of the more challenging of the seven Spiritual Works of Mercy. Today’s Gospel recounts Jesus’ healing of ten lepers, with only one returning to give thanks. The Gospels also describe Jesus asking the disciples to pray with him in the Garden of Gethsemane (Lk. 22:39-46), only to return and find them sleeping. In Matthew’s and Mark’s accounts of this event, Jesus asked the three Apostles closest to him (Peter, James, and John) three times for the same favor... and is let down three times! Perhaps worst of all, because it was the wrong committed by the one to whom he was very close, Jesus endured Peter’s threefold denial.

In today’s Second Reading, Paul “bears with everything... so that they (the chosen) too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus...” While awaiting execution in his prison cell,

Paul rested quietly in faith in the promises made by Christ, uniting himself to these promises and remaining steadfast. This faithfulness to God’s promises allowed Paul to bear all wrongs. He knew what was real and lasting, and united himself to it, “If we have died with him we shall also live with him... he (Jesus) remains faithful for he cannot deny himself.”

God’s mercy is intimately tied to his faithfulness; he forever offers mercy because he is forever faithful. This is his nature. (Pope Francis, *The Name of God is Mercy*, p. 10) Certain of God’s faithfulness (as well as our own failures at faithfulness!), we move forward to bear wrongs patiently. Safe in God’s hand, feeling the mercy that his faithfulness brings us in our wretchedness, we strive to bear the wrongs of others, so that they “too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus.”



Saints Preserve Us!

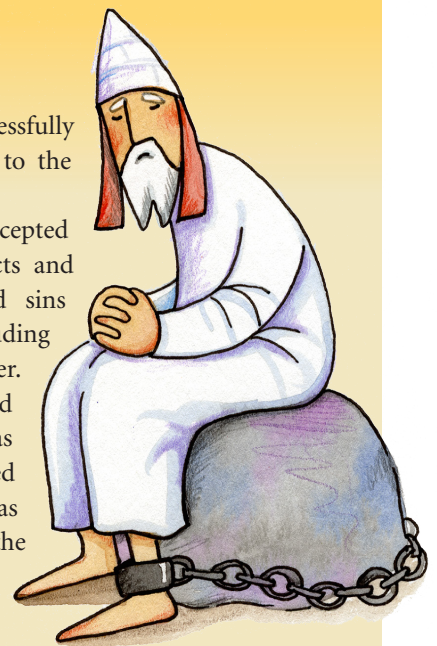
October 14 marks the memorial of a man who experienced great mercy as a slave and who later extended great mercy as Pope. This slave-Pope was St. Callistus I, reigning from 217 till his martyrdom in 223. Ironically, what little we know of him is mostly based on the writings of St. Hippolytus, his competitor and eventual arch-enemy!

Hippolytus recounts that the young Callistus, a servant in a Christian household, was entrusted with investing charitable funds in a bank which failed. Callistus fled to escape the contributors’ wrath, was captured, denounced, and sent off as a slave to the mines of Sardinia. Mercifully he was ransomed from a death sentence in these infamous mines through the intervention of Pope St. Victor I.

Callistus was later ordained a deacon by Pope St. Zephyrinus and put in charge of developing newly acquired property into a cemetery for Christian martyrs. In 217 Callistus succeeded

Zephyrinus as Pope and successfully combated heresies relating to the Trinity and Christ’s nature.

Controversially, he also accepted converts from heretical sects and decreed that all confessed sins should be absolved, including even adultery and murder. This great act of mercy ignited Hippolytus’ 16 year schism as ‘antipope’ (which only ended when he repented and was martyred), but it also set the standard for the Sacrament of Reconciliation we are blessed to receive today.



Scriptural Secrets

In today's First Reading, Elisha heals a Syrian, a foreigner, of leprosy. Jesus used this very same story about the cure of the Syrian, Naaman, army commander of Aram (Damascus) in the Book of Kings, as evidence that "no prophet is accepted in his native place." (Lk. 4:24-27) In this way, he also makes it clear how often prophets were persecuted and even martyred by their own people.

2 Kings 5:14-17
2 Timothy 2:8-13
Luke 17:11-19

(CCC 558) This story in Luke 4 ends with Jesus infuriating those listening, then slipping through the crowd to freedom.

Today in the Gospel Jesus once again reveals the opposition and lack of acceptance he endures from his people.

He healed ten lepers (more than Elisha!), but, once again, it is only the Samaritan, the foreigner, who recognized Jesus' miracle and returned to give thanks. Even though he had answered their pleas, "Have mercy on us!" (RSVCE), only one acknowledged what had been done for him. In both Old and New Testaments, it seems that the foreigner, the outlier, or those just marginally part

of the House of Israel are more open to the God of Israel than those more closely within his house. These residents are instead satisfied with stiff necks and stones at the ready.

This can't be reassuring to the Apostles and the disciples who are being prepared to 'go out.' Striving to not only bring God's Word to others, but to do so in humble and merciful ways, the Apostles and disciples must face the fact that persecution and opposition are ahead on the path they must travel.



Catechetical

The flight into Egypt and the massacre of the innocents make manifest the opposition of darkness to the light: 'He came to



Corner

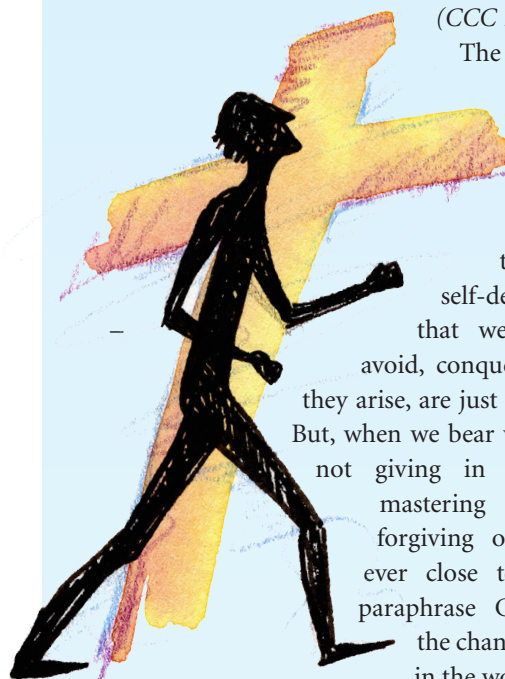
his own home, and his own people received him not.' Christ's whole life was lived under the sign of persecution. His own share it with him." (CCC 530)

It is in the shadow of persecution that Christians walk. The path that Christ walked all the way to the Cross was one radically opposed to the message and way of this world. Whether required to simply endure laughter and humiliation for this way, or even to endure a far greater cost, the Christian who lives his faith will always have a price to pay.

The good news is that this path we are invited to share is designed to form our souls – we fully turn toward God and are fully conformed to him. "Conversion is accomplished in daily life by gestures of reconciliation... (by) acceptance of suffering, endurance of persecution for the sake of righteousness. Taking up one's cross each day and following Jesus..." (CCC 1435)

The bad news is that, like any obstacle course, this course is hard. The obstacles –

temptation, self-denial, forgiveness that we are meant to avoid, conquer, or employ as they arise, are just plain hard to do. But, when we bear wrongs patiently, not giving in to temptations, mastering ourselves and forgiving others, we move ever close to God and, to paraphrase Gandhi, 'become the change we want to see in the world.'



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